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Self-reporting of mental illness below 1%: Study

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Musheer and Saumy guide India to a massive win

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SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈہ روزنامہ بنگلور

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PHOTO: PTI

3 jawans dead, 10 injured in Ch'garh Naxal attack

RAIPUR, 30 JAN

Three CRPF personnel were killed and 10 others injured during a gun battle with the Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district on Tuesday, official sources said. The incident occurred near the Tekalgudem village when a joint team of security personnel was out on a search operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar Range) Sundarraj P said. The village is located along the border of Bijapur and Sukma districts. A team from the 201 battalion of the CoBRA and 150 battalion of the CRPF was working in the area to establish a Forward Operating Base (FOB) when the exchange of fire began around 1pm. An FOB is a remote camp meant to facilitate security forces operating in core Naxal areas. Two CRPF personnel were killed and about 10 have suffered injuries during the operation, the sources said. The Commando Battalion for Resolute Action (CoBRA) of the CRPF is a jungle warfare unit. The commandos have launched an effective retaliation, the sources said, adding helicopters are being requisitioned for evacuating the injured. *—PTI*

Nitish Kumar's new govt to seek trust vote on 10 Feb

PATNA, 30 JAN

The new NDA government in Bihar led by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar will seek a trust vote in the assembly on 10 February, according to a notification issued on Tuesday. The government will seek the trust vote on the first day of the budget session after the customary address by Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar to both Houses of the legislature, the notification issued by the Parliamentary Affairs Department said. Kumar, the president of the JD(U), took oath as chief minister of Bihar for a record ninth time on Sunday after a dramatic volte-face, ditching the INDIA grouping, and forming the new government with the BJP, which he had dumped less than 18 months ago. The upcoming session will have a total of 12 working days, and the state budget will be presented on 12 February, the notification said. It is expected to be a stormy session with RJD MLA Awadh Bihari Choudhary yet to step down as the speaker. *—PTI*

'Missing' Soren back in Ranchi, says 'I reside in your hearts'

ED seizes ₹36L, SUV & incriminating papers from Soren's home

RANCHI/NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Ending suspense over his whereabouts and intense political drama, Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren on Tuesday reached his official residence in Ranchi. He chaired a meeting of his alliance MLAs, a day ahead of the ED is to question him in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam.

The official sources have said that they have seized Rs 36 lakh, a BMW SUV and some "incriminating" documents during the search operations at his house in the national capital on Monday.

A day after the ED team visited the JMM executive president's Delhi home with the intent to question him and agency officials claimed that he was "untraceable", sources close to Soren said that the 48-year-old Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader came by road from Delhi, undertaking a more than 1,250 km journey.

Hemant Soren with JMM MLAs after paying tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary in Ranchi on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

"I reside in your hearts," he told reporters in Ranchi after paying tributes to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary. He was replying to a query regarding his absence.

According to sources, Soren held the meeting of alliance legislators at the CM House to discuss the present political situation in the state.

Soren's wife Kalpana Soren was also present at the meeting.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made across the state to maintain law and order, including the deployment of an additional 7,000 policemen.

Prohibitory orders were imposed in key areas of Ranchi, including near the CM House, the Raj Bhavan and the ED office at Doranda, from 10 am to 10 pm, officials said.

Soren, also the executive president of the ruling JMM, had left for the national capital on 27 January and his scheduled government programme in the state was cancelled without any explanation.

In an email to the probe agency on Sunday, Soren alleged that the ED's actions were "motivated by political agenda" to disrupt the state government's functioning and claimed that its insistence to record his statement again on or before 31 January "reeked of malice".

Meanwhile, JMM and the BJP leaders engaged in a verbal duel with the opposition party in the state claiming that Soren was "missing" for several hours after going to Delhi and the Congress and JMM alleging that the saffron camp was spreading rumours about Soren.

Citing the ED's recovery of cash from Soren's residence, BJP MP Nishikant Dubey wondered if the Chief Minister has been hiding his "billions" of rupees after going "missing" for 50 hours.

The BJP has also been claiming that Soren wants his wife to become state chief minister in the event of his arrest, a claim that has been dismissed by him.

The ED has so far arrested 14 people in the case, including 2011-batch IAS officer Chhavi Ranjan who served as the director of the state's Social Welfare Department and deputy commissioner of Ranchi.

An employee of the Jharkhand land revenue department, Bhanu Prasad Prasad, was also arrested by the agency in the case.

The ED investigation pertains to "huge amounts of proceeds of crime generated by manipulation of official records by showing dummy sellers and purchasers in the guise of forged/ bogus documents to acquire huge parcels of land having value in crores'. *—PTI*

TIT-FOR-TAT MURDER

15 PFI men get death penalty for killing BJP leader

ALAPPUZHA, 30 JAN

A Kerala court on Tuesday sentenced to death 15 people associated with the now-banned outfit Popular Front of India (PFI) in connection with the murder of BJP OBC wing leader Ranjith Sreenivasan in this district in 2021, the special prosecutor of the case said here.

The sentence was pronounced by Mavelikkara Additional Sessions Judge -I V G Sreedevi. There was "absolute justification" in giving capital punishment to all the accused people in this case, the court said.

"It is true that there are no records to show that the accused people were convicted earlier. The most important aspect is that the heinous crime was committed in the comfort zone ie., in the house of the victim, in the presence of his mother, wife and minor child .... all showing the brutality of the crime," it said.

According to special prosecutor Prathap G Padickal, although 14 out of the total of 15 people convicted in the case were produced before the court on Tuesday, the judge orally stated that the sentence would also apply to the convict who was not produced today.

Ranjith Sreenivasan *PHOTO: PTI*

When the remaining convict, who is currently hospitalised due to an illness, is produced in court, the sentence against him will be pronounced, he said.

The convict in the case are Naisam, Ajmal, Anoop, Muhammed Aslam, Abdul Kalam, Sarafudheen, Manshad, Jaseeb Raja, Navas, Sameer, Naseer, Sakeer Hussain, Shaji and Shernas Asharaf.

Sreenivasan, a lawyer and the BJP OBC Morcha state secretary, was brutally attacked and killed in his home on 19 December, 2021. *—PTI*

AHEAD OF PAK POLLS, IMRAN KHAN GETS 10 YEAR JAIL IN CIPHER CASE

ISLAMABAD, 30 JAN

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were on Tuesday sentenced to 10 years each in prison for leaking state secrets. The verdict was pronounced ahead of the 8 February general elections. The decision to sentence the two leaders was announced by special court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain during the hearing of the case held at the special court in Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi established under the Official Secrets Act. Khan is already serving a three-year jail term after being convicted of corruption. *—PTI*

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K'taka bans trekking without booking

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

To avoid overcrowding in the forest trekking areas, the Forest Department has imposed a temporary ban from 1 February on the trekking paths that do not have an online booking.

Minister of Wildlife and Forest Eshwar Khandre has issued a clear instruction to the Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief of the Forest Task Force. Khandre mentioned that some trekkers are staying overnight in tents while trekking and the places are trashed with plastic carry bags, bottles, plates, leftover food items and others. He suggested that treks should be temporarily restricted until a Standard Operating Procedure is formulated in all trekking spots including Kumara Parvatha, Thukkanninagudda, where there is no online booking system. The decision comes after thousands of trekkers visited Kumara Parvatha in Pushpagiri forest on 26 January. However, 30 trekking paths in the State are accepting online booking through Karnataka Tourism website. *—Salar News*

11 FACE BREACH OF PRIVILEGE

Suspension of 14 MPs lifted ahead of Budget

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

A day before the start of the Budget session, the chairs of the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on Monday revoked the suspension of 14 Opposition MPs, allowing them to attend House proceedings, sources said.

The MPs -- 11 of the Rajya Sabha and three of the Lok Sabha -- were suspended during the last session and their cases were referred to the respective committees of privileges.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi said the Rajya Sabha chairman and the Lok Sabha speaker have agreed to the government's request to revoke the suspension of the 14 MPs.

The Privileges Committee of the Lok Sabha had recommended that the suspension of the three MPs -- Abdul Khaleque, K Jayakumar and Vijay Vasanth of the Congress -- be revoked after they expressed regret for their conduct during the Winter session when their relentless protests prompted the Chair to take action.

The Rajya Sabha Privileges Committee on Tuesday held 11 suspended opposition MPs guilty of breach of

PHOTO: PTI

privilege and contempt of the Council of States, but Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar revoked their suspension allowing them to attend the Budget session, sources said. In its report to the Rajya Sabha chairman a day before the session starts on Wednesday, the committee also recommended that the period of suspension already suffered by the members be treated as "sufficient punishment" for the transgression. The MPs held "guilty of breach of privilege and contempt of the Council" of States are Jebi Mather Hisham, L Hanumanthaiah, Neeraj Dangi, Rajmani Patel, Kumar Ketkar, GC Chandrashekhar, Binoy Viswam, Sandosh P, Mohamed Abdulla, Brittas and AA Rahim. *—PTI*

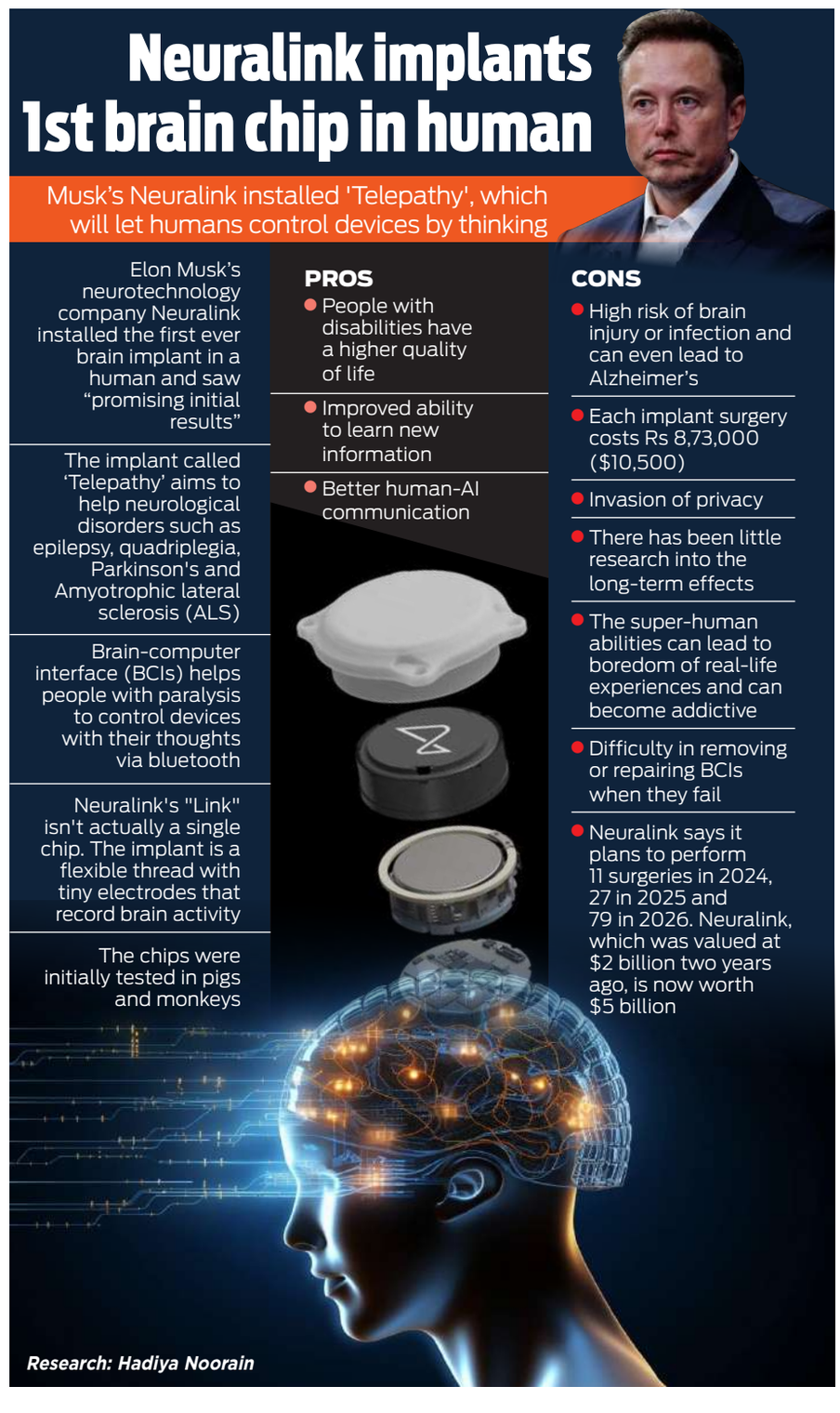
25 injured in clash over Ambedkar

MYSURU, 30 JAN

Tension flared in Hallare village of Nanjangud taluk on Monday night as a clash erupted between two groups over the installation of Dr BR Ambedkar's nameplate. More than 25 individuals sustained injuries, including a PSI (Police Sub-Inspector) and three police personnel. Additionally, over 30 vehicles were damaged during the altercation.

The conflict originated when a group of youths applied to the local panchayat and obtained permission from the PDO (Panchayat Development Officer) to name the road leading from Hallare village to Hura village after Ambedkar. However, objections were raised by another group just five days ago, leading to the postponement of the nameplate installation. The situation took a violent turn as miscreants began pelting stones.

District Superintendent of Police Seema Latkar, ASP Nandini, DySP Govindaraju, and Inspector Sunil Kumar visited the site. The police presence in the village has been significantly increased to maintain control and prevent further escalation of tensions. *—Salar News*


Neuralink implants 1st brain chip in human
Musk's Neuralink installed 'Telepathy', which will let humans control devices by thinking
Elon Musk's neurotechnology company Neuralink installed the first ever brain implant in a human and saw "promising initial results"
The implant called 'Telepathy' aims to help neurological disorders such as epilepsy, quadriplegia, Parkinson's and Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS)
Brain-computer interface (BCIs) helps people with paralysis to control devices with their thoughts via bluetooth
Neuralink's "Link" isn't actually a single chip. The implant is a flexible thread with tiny electrodes that record brain activity
The chips were initially tested in pigs and monkeys
PROS
People with disabilities have a higher quality of life
Improved ability to learn new information
Better human-AI communication
CONS
High risk of brain injury or infection and can even lead to Alzheimer's
Each implant surgery costs Rs 8,73,000 ($10,500)
Invasion of privacy
There has been little research into the long-term effects
The super-human abilities can lead to boredom of real-life experiences and can become addictive
Difficulty in removing or repairing BCIs when they fail
Neuralink says it plans to perform 11 surgeries in 2024, 27 in 2025 and 79 in 2026. Neuralink, which was valued at $2 billion two years ago, is now worth $5 billion
Research: Hadiya Noorain

19 PAK NATIONALS RESCUED

Navy, yet again, saves 2 hijacked ships in 36 hrs

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

The Indian Navy rescued an Iranian-flagged fishing vessel with 19 Pakistani crew members and a Sri Lankan trawler in two swift operations after armed pirates hijacked the boats in the Arabian Sea amid deteriorating security situation arising out of Iran-backed Houthi rebels targeting various cargo ships in the region. The rescues by the warship INS Sumitra came within 36 hours of each other.

Indian warship INS Sumitra rescued 19 Pakistani crew of a fishing vessel after their Iranian-flagged fishing vessel was attacked by pirates in the east coast of Somalia, officials said on Tuesday. INS Sumitra has been deployed for anti-piracy and maritime security operations in the east of Somalia and Gulf of Aden.

INS Sumitra successfully conducted a crucial mission by rescuing the hijacked fishing vessel Al Naemi *PHOTO: ANI*

The ship had thwarted a piracy attempt on Iranian fishing vessel Iman on Monday. In yet another successful anti-piracy operation off the East Coast of Somalia, INS Sumitra rescued fishing vessel Al Naeemi and her 19 crew members from 11 Somali pirates on Monday, Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said. "INS Sumitra, over the course of less than 36 hours, through swift, persistent and relentless efforts has rescued two hijacked fishing vessels along with 36 crew (17 Iranian and 19 Pakistani) in Southern Arabian Sea approximately 850 nautical miles West of Kochi," Madhwal said.

In a coordinated response, the Indian Navy along with naval forces of Sri Lanka and Seychelles, rescued a fishing vessel with six crew members after it was hijacked in the sea lanes east of Mogadishu, Indian Navy spokesperson Commander Vivek Madhwal said on Tuesday. The Indian Navy has carried out several successful rescues in recent weeks after receiving distress calls from vessels. The Sri Lankan-flagged fishing trawler Lorenzo Putha was hijacked by three pirates on 27 January, the officials said. The Indian Navy deployed INS Sharada and also tasked the Sea Guardian long-range drones to locate the hijacked fishing vessel on Sunday.

The three pirates surrendered to the Seychelles Coast Guard and all six crew members are safe and the vessel is being escorted to Mahe in Seychelles. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

BBMP notice to 49K shops over 60% Kannada rule

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) issued notice to 49,241 shops to comply with the 60 per cent Kannada rule on name boards. Meanwhile, 16,813 commercial establishments have already installed the new boards but 32,428 shops are yet to comply with the order. BBMP Chief Commissioner Tushar Giri Nath on Tuesday instructed the zonal officers to fasten the process. He also said that after giving the letter of understanding to the shops, seven days should be granted, and if the shop owners do not install it in the given time, disciplinary action should be taken against them. The last date for the installation of nameplates is 28 February, and if the installation is not done the BBMP officers can suspend the license of the establishments.

—Salar News

Sister jumps into well, brother tries to save; both die

KALABURAGI, 30 JAN

A brother and sister died after drowning in a well in Patapalli village of Chincholi taluk. The victims are Nandini, 19, and Sandeep, 23. In a fit of rage, the girl jumped first after an argument with her brother who scolded her for being irregular to college and asked her to attend classes. Her brother jumped in to save her. According to the police, the quarrel between them happened at home. Angered, she ran away as her brother scolded her. Her brother also followed her, but she jumped into the well. The parents noticed the bunch of flowers worn by Nandini that day and searched the well to find the bodies of both children. Chincholi police have registered a case in this regard.

—Salar News

Record hundi collections at Mantralaya mutt

KOLAR, 30 JAN

Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt at Mantralaya has raked in a record hundi collection in a span of 33 days. According to a press note issued by the manager of the mutt, the counting of Hundi collections was taken up on Monday morning and concluded on Tuesday. The total collection was a tune of Rs 4 crore and 15 lakhs. Besides this, devotees have also offered 44 grams of gold and 3.6kg of silver in the hundi offerings.

—Salar News

City to host Catholic Bishops' 36th general body meet

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

The Catholic Bishops' Conference of India (CBCI) on Tuesday said its 36th General Body Meeting is set to commence on 31 January at St John's Medical College here. Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, the Apostolic Nuncio to India and Nepal, will inaugurate the meeting and approximately 175 Bishops from across India are expected to participate in it. This year's central theme, "Church's Response to the Current Socio-Political Situation in the Country and the Benefits and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence," highlights the Church's commitment to engaging with the pressing issues of our time. The theme aligns with the recently published message by Pope Francis for World Communication Day, it said. According to CBCI, the meeting's agenda includes a range of critical issues, such as the current socio-political situation, reflecting on the outcomes of the Synod in October 2023, the present status of Manipur, and examining the overall situation of Christians in India.

—PTI

Godse's descendants disturbing peace: CM

Siddaramaiah said the agitation by Opposition in Mandya was aimed at gaining political mileage

MANDYA, 30 JAN

In the midst of a row over the removal of a Hanuman flag, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Tuesday said "descendants" of Mahatma Gandhi's killer Nathuram Godse are disturbing peace in the State.

As Mandya witnessed a massive demonstration by BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) to protest the removal of the saffron flag flying from the 108 feet flagstaff at Keragodu village in Mandya district on Monday, Siddaramaiah said the agitation by the Opposition was aimed at gaining political mileage. "There are people amongst us who worship Godse though they speak about Mahatma Gandhi as well," he told reporters after paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi on his death anniversary. When asked about the tension in Mandya, Siddaramaiah said attempts are being made to disturb peace. "Those disturbing peace are the descendants of Godse. People should live with love and trust for peace in the society. No one should try to inflame communal passions," Chief Minister said.

Panchayat Development Officer suspended in Mandya

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah during 'Martyrs Day' on Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary at Vidhana Soudha premises, in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Amid simmering tension in Mandya over the removal of Hanuman flag the Keragodu village Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) has been suspended.

The order issued by Mandya Zila Panchayat Chief Executive Officer Sheikh Tanveer Asif on Monday said the permission was granted only to hoist the Indian tricolour at Keragodu village.

However, the PDO not only gave an opportunity to the people to hoist the Hanuman flag, but also did not take steps to remove it, the order said. It was only on 28 January, that the Panchayat Sub-divisional Officer along with Tehsildar and police officers removed the flag, which created a law and order problem for which the PDO was held accountable.

- Mandya witnessed a massive demonstration by BJP and Janata Dal (Secular) to protest the removal of the saffron flag flying from the 108 feet flagstaff at Keragodu village in Mandya district on Monday, Siddaramaiah said the agitation by the Opposition was aimed at gaining political mileage

As Opposition BJP and its ally JD(S) staged a massive protest in Mandya against the removal of the Hanuman flag and its restoration, security was beefed up on Monday.

Police on Sunday had resorted to mild lathi charge to disperse the crowd at Keragodu village, and subsequently hoisted the national flag replacing Hanuman flag in the presence of officials of the administration.

—PTI

Cong insults Constitution, says Ashwath

Bengaluru, 30 Jan

Former deputy chief minister and MLA CN Ashwath Narayan on Tuesday accused the State government of disrespecting the Constitution. In press conference, Narayan said the government has behaved disrespectfully by lowering the flag after permitting the district administration to hoist it. "The government is playing with the emotions. They are conducting Constitution Awareness Week but they lack the awareness," he said. He also asked immediate appointment to the vacant posts of chancellors of universities and release of funds to seven universities.*—Salar News*

Shivakumar hits out at BJP and JD(S)

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

DK Shivakumar **PHOTO: PTI**

Speaking about the Hanuman flag controversy in Mandya, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said, "They are trying to provoke innocent villagers to disturb law and order in the district. BJP and JD(S) are trying this new experiment in the district. The people of Mandya are secular and tolerant."

Regarding the hoisting of the Hanuman flag, he said, "The gram panchayat has given an undertaking that they would only hoist the national flag and State flag. The national and State flags need to be respected. Our government had brought an ordinance on the use of Kannada on sign boards but the Governor has rejected it and has asked us to get it passed in Assembly."

Speaking about the door-to-door distribution of the Hanuman flag by BJP, he said, "No one is objecting distribution of the Hanuman flag. BJP had campaigned for the tricolour some time back, has it forgotten the tricolour already? BJP is in power in the centre."

HDK almost merged JD(S) with BJP: DKS

Taking a dig at JD(S) leader, Shivakumar on Tuesday said Former Chief Minister HD Kumaraswamy has almost merged JD(S) with BJP.

"Kumaraswamy may choose to wear a saffron shawl or any other shawl, that is his party's internal matter but BJP is trying to find a political base in Mandya and in the process, we do not know who is going to swallow whom," he said.

About the Teachers' constituency elections, Shivakumar said, "Our government will take care of the welfare of the teaching fraternity. We had made certain promises to teachers in our manifesto; we will fulfil all of them."

—Salar News with Agency

QUALITY CHECK

Minister for Medical Education and Skill Development Sharanaprakash Rudrappa Patil, Additional Chief Secretary Uma Mahadevan and others check out sarees at FNHW Regional Workshop in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

VIDEO GONE VIRAL

Govt school head suspended for forcing girls to clean toilets

SIDLAGHATTA, 30 JAN

A video showing two students cleaning toilets in a government school in Chikkaballapur district has gone viral, triggering uproar online.

The headmistress of Government Higher Primary School in Sidlaghatta taluk's Kuduvakote was suspended. Reportedly, the headmistress forced a class 5 girl student to clean the toilet on Tuesday. A parent who was visiting the school took a video of the incident and sent it to Education Department officials including Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa. Block Educational officer Narendra along with Taluk Social Welfare officers questioned the students on Wednesday following which the headmistress Renukamma was suspended.

- The school has 27 students and three teachers including the headmistress. This is the fourth such incident in the state in two months

The school has 27 students and three teachers including the headmistress. This is the fourth such incident in the state in two months.

The previous incidents include students being sent down toilet pits in Kolar at the Yelavalli Morarji Desai Residential School, and self-cleaning duties enforced at Andarahalli Government School in Bengaluru. Each incident has sparked outrage and calls for immediate action.

The surge in such incidents also prompted the Karnataka Department of Public Education to issue an order banning government schools from forcing students to clean toilets.It also warned of disciplinary and criminal action against offenders. The department has clarified that students can be engaged "only in academic, sports, and co-curricular activities" and not for cleaning toilets.

—Salar News

Kumaraswamy **PHOTO: PTI**

HDK asks why has CM not accepted Kantharaju report

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy challenged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to accept the Kantharaju caste census report immediately.

"Siddaramaiah says Kumaraswamy, Basavaraj Bommai and BS Yediyurappa did not accept the report. He has been in power for almost a year, why he has not accepted the report?" questioned Kumaraswamy.

Addressing a press conference, Kumaraswamy said there are about 108 subspecies in the 2A reservation; let Siddaramaiah come to an open discussion so we can talk about who has got the lion's share of the reservation facility.

The 2A category in the state is for occupational castes, such as Kumbara, Ediga, and Kuruba. The 2A category has a 15 per cent internal reservation.

"Siddaramaiah claims people are against him because a shepherd's son. Former prime minister Deve Gowda had made this shepherd's son a finance minister. He was a Chief Minister multiple times and a chance to end the caste system but why did he not do it?" Speaking about Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar re-joining BJP, Kumaraswamy said, "Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given the same offer to me in 2018 but I did not accept it. If I had accepted I would have remained the chief minister."

—Salar News

DKS dubs Sonia Gandhi's RS seat rumours as false

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Karnataka Congress chief DK Shivakumar on Tuesday dismissed as false and speculation some media reports which claimed that former party president Sonia Gandhi may be offered a Rajya Sabha seat from the State, and clarified that no such discussions have taken place.

There have been reports in a section of media that Gandhi may not contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, and she may be given a Rajya Sabha seat from Karnataka.

- Some reports say that Gandhi may not contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, and she may be given a Rajya Sabha seat from State

"All such information is false, no such discussions have happened. You (media) are writing such speculations, no such discussions have happened," Shivakumar, said.

—Salar News

4 men, mother held for raping teen girl

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 30 JAN

Chikkaballapur police have arrested five people for gang-raping a 13-year-old girl child for over 20 days at various places including lodges in Chikkaballapur and Sidlaghatta. The police has also arrested the victim's mother Nandini, 35, for assisting the culprits in committing the crime. The accused are Ganesh, Manu Prasad, Manjo and Ramesh.

According to police, the girl dropped out of school after the sixth standard. She along with her mother were staying in Sidlaghatta for the past month. The accused-- all in the age group of 24 to 26 years--got in touch with the mother and she handed over the child to them. They took the girl to various places and gang-raped her for over twenty days. One of the girl's relatives filed a complaint with the women's police station at Chikkaballapur on 23 January. The girl is currently hospitalised and will housed in the Child Care Centre after discharge. Nandini had left her husband a few years back and police suspect that she was also into the prostitution business.

—Salar News

Man held, e-cigarettes worth ₹3 cr seized

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Central Crime Branch officials on Tuesday arrested a man and recovered e-cigarettes worth Rs 3 crore from him

According to the police, each e-cigarette was sold for Rs 5,000 to Rs. 6,000. In 2019, E-cigarettes were banned in India by the central government under the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act. The accused Shoaib hails from Kerala and was settled in Bengaluru after returning from Dubai.

He lived in his brother's house in the city and sold e-cigarettes from the godown through delivery aggregators. The e-cigarettes were imported from Dubai to Bengaluru via Delhi through Blue Dart couriers, according to police officials. The accused sold the e-cigarettes to retail shops and smokers and he took orders online.

Seven drug peddlers arrested

The narcotics wing of the CCB officials arrested seven peddlers and recovered drugs worth Rs 1.5 crore from them. The accused were selling drugs in different areas.

Four arrested for stealing gold worth Rs 1.52 cr

Whitefield police arrested four accused who pretended to be officers from the Bureau of Standards Chennai. The accused told the workers of a jewellery shop that they were there to check the purity of gold and took 1.74kg of gold stating it lacked purity. *—Salar News*

STARTS FROM 2 FEB

Hampi gears up to host annual fest

VIJAYANAGARA, 30 JAN

Hampi, the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Karnataka, is all set to host its annual festival, the Hampi Utsav, from 2 to 4 February. After facing several postponements and setbacks last year, the district administration is leaving no stone unturned to ensure the success of this year's festival.

The Hampi Utsav is a three-day celebration that usually takes place in November every year. However, last year's festival faced numerous postponements, leading to a low turnout during the event. To prevent a repeat of last year's turnout, the Vijayanagara district administration has taken several measures to engage more people and transform the festival into a public spectacle.

The Hampi Utsav is a three-day celebration that usually takes place in November every year **PHOTO: SALAR**

The organisers have invited District In-charge Minister Zameer Ahmed, MLAs from all constituencies, the district commissioners, zilla panchayat CEOs, and the superintendents of police to the festival. They have also launched a social media campaign and put up posters on buses and various locations in Hospet and Hampi. In addition, posters are being displayed in every village across the district. This year, the parking facilities have been arranged closer to the festival platforms. An 80-acre area has been allocated for parking on seven sides, and a hundred buses will operate free of charge from Hospet to Hampi to facilitate easy access for attendees. Buses will also transport visitors from taluk centres and villages of Hospet.

To kick off the festivities, a bike rally has been organised on 1 February at 8 am. Meanwhile, 50 bikers will also take a rally from Bengaluru to Hampi, starting at 10 am and reaching Hampi by 2 pm.

—Salar News

Artists seek more jobs at GAFX

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Artists say low awareness about the jobs has been a doom to their careers **PHOTO: SALAR**

Breaking the stereotypes for artists not landing a full-time job, the artists' community at GAFX 2024 are giving every reason for companies to hire them.

Nearly 2,500 artists gathered at the Game, Animation and VFX (GAFX) fair seeking jobs. It is an annual event supported by the Government to enrich the local artistic community

Speaking to Salar News, artists claimed that there are plenty of job opportunities for them but companies shy away from hiring them. They also flagged low awareness about the jobs for artists Dheekshetha K, a clay sculpture artist from Bengaluru told Salar News, "After I finished my degree in sculpting I had no idea about the type of jobs that I have to look for. I waited for over 1.5 years and then found out that many car showrooms are looking for sculpting artists to do a 3D module of automobiles."

Many artists They hope that the City comes together to raise awareness about the importance of artists in various fields and create more opportunities for them. Artists said that companies should move away from their traditional approach of pitching their projects and added that they could help the companies use sustainable materials to present their products at a cheaper price.

Artists said that low awareness about the jobs has been a doom to their careers. GAFX held 1,500 events where these artists were given the freedom to choose and build a network with professionals. The event provided a forum for professionals to connect, share their work, and find avenues for employment. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

Parliament's Budget Session begins today

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

The Budget Session of Parliament, the last of the present Lok Sabha, begins on Wednesday with President Droupadi Murmu addressing a joint sitting of the lower and upper Houses, and the government urging opposition parties to cooperate in the smooth conduct of the proceedings. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Interim Budget on 1 February ahead of the Lok Sabha elections likely to be held in April-May. The new government will present the full budget after it assumes office. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pralhad Joshi told a meeting of floor leaders of political parties in Parliament that Sitharaman will also present the Budget for Jammu and Kashmir, which is under the President's Rule. Joshi said the main agenda of the 17th Lok Sabha's brief session, set to conclude on 9 February, was the President's Address, presentation of the Interim Budget and the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address with a reply by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Opposition leaders raised a host of issues during the meeting of floor leaders chaired by Defence Minister.*—PTI*

Cong leader's wife killed in car accident

ALWAR, 30 JAN

Congress leader Manvendra Singh's wife was killed and the former MP and his son injured when their car met with an accident in Alwar on the Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, officials said. Manvendra Singh, who is son of former Union minister Jaswant Singh, and his family were on their way to Jaipur from Delhi. The driver lost control of the car and collided with a wall. *—PTI*

Priyanka slams Modi, says his guarantees are jumla

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Hitting out at the Centre over people seeking jobs in Israel, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday said talk of five trillion dollar economy and Modi's guarantee are just a "jumla" with the real issue in the country being that of unemployment and inflation for which she claimed the BJP government has no solution. Congress General Secretary shared a video on X which showed people queuing up for a recruitment drive to send workers to Israel. In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi said, "If there is a war situation anywhere, then first of all we rescue our citizens from there and bring them back to our country." "But today unemployment has resulted in such a situation that the government is not even saving thousands of helpless youth from taking the risk of going to war-torn Israel," she said. *—PTI*

Ch'garh varsity founder nominated to Rajya Sabha

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Hitting out at the Centre over people seeking jobs in Israel, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Tuesday said talk of five trillion dollar economy and Modi's guarantee are just a "jumla" with the real issue in the country being that of unemployment and inflation for which she claimed the Centre has no solution. Congress General Secretary shared a video on X which showed people queuing up for a recruitment drive to send workers to Israel. In a post on X in Hindi, Gandhi said, "If there is a war situation anywhere, then first of all we rescue our citizens from there and bring them back to our country." "But today unemployment has resulted in situation that government is not saving of helpless youth from going to Israel," she said. *—PTI*

BJP wins Chandigarh mayoral elections

This is the first test of INDIA alliance against BJP

CHANDIGARH, 30 JAN

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday moved the Punjab and Haryana High Court, seeking setting aside the mayoral poll results and demanding fresh elections under the supervision of a retired HC judge.

BJP swept the Chandigarh mayoral polls on Tuesday, retaining the three top posts in a setback to the AAP and Congress which had contested the elections as allies.

Councillors from the two INDIA bloc parties created a ruckus in the Chandigarh Municipal Corporation House as the result for the mayor's post was declared, and boycotted the next phase – elections to the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor.

BJP candidate Manoj Sonkar defeated the AAP's Kuldeep Kumar for the mayor's post, polling 16 votes against the 12 won by his rival. Eight votes were declared invalid. BJP nominees Kuljit Sandhu and Rajinder Sharma were declared elected to the posts of senior deputy mayor and deputy mayor, respectively.

Opposition councillors alleged there was tampering with the ballot papers at the elections *PHOTO:PTI*

Opposition councillors alleged there was tampering with the ballot papers at the elections, a charge rubbished by BJP. On social media, AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal expressed "serious concern" over the "cheating" in "broad daylight". An AAP councillor said the party will approach the Punjab and Haryana High Court. Tuesday's elections too were held on the directions of the high court after a postponement on 18 January.

AAP and Congress accused presiding officer Anil Masih of making some marks on the ballots during the counting, rendering them invalid. They argued that the "invalid" ballots tilted the balance in BJP candidate's favour.

"The worst fears of unabashed tampering by

- AAP and Congress accused presiding officer Anil Masih of making some marks on the ballots during the counting, rendering them invalid

BJP's councillor-presiding officer in a premeditated and planned intrigue to murder democracy have come true in the Chandigarh mayoral elections," Congress leader Pawan Kumar Bansal alleged. He claimed that the Congress-AAP agent was not allowed to examine the ballot papers. "The presiding officer announced rejection of eight votes, declared the BJP candidate the winner and went away. BJP members rushed to the table and tore off the ballot papers," he alleged.

Congress councillor Gurbax Rawat alleged that the presiding officer did not call the party's election agent when the ballot box was opened for counting. "We do not accept the result," he said. *—PTI*

RAHUL ROASTS NITISH

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi during the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, in Bihar, on Tuesday *PHOTO:PTI*

INDIA does not need Nitish Kumar: Rahul

PURNEA, 30 JAN

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday asserted that the 'Mahagathbandhan' will continue fighting for social justice in Bihar, and the alliance "does not need" Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for the cause.

Speaking at a rally in Purnea district, where his 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' entered during the day, Gandhi also took a swipe at Kumar for switching sides frequently.

"He (Kumar) cannot exert pressure... he immediately takes a U-turn," the former Congress president said. Kumar on Sunday took oath as the Chief Minister of Bihar for a record ninth time after a dramatic volte-face, ditching the 'Mahagathbandhan' and the opposition bloc INDIA and forming a new government with BJP, which he had dumped less than 18 months ago.

"The 'Mahagathbandhan' (grand alliance) will fight for social justice in Bihar; we don't require Nitish Kumar for that purpose, we don't require him at all," Gandhi said. Congress is a part of the 'Mahagathbandhan', which also comprises RJD and Left parties.

Gandhi also said Dalits and backward classes don't get due representation in all sectors of the country. "Our country needs a caste-based census to determine the exact population of Dalits, OBCs, tribals and others," the Congress MP told the rally at Ranghbhumi Maidan.

Commenting on Manipur, he claimed that it is experiencing an "atmosphere of civil war" and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is yet to visit the ethnic strife-torn state.

AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, who was scheduled to speak at the rally, could not reach Purnea, as his flight failed to land at the airport due to low visibility, Bihar Congress chief Akhilesh Prasad said. Kharge, however, spoke virtually at the public meeting. *—PTI*

HOMAGE TO MAHATMA

,Vice President, President and Prime Minister pay homage to Mahatma Gandhi on Martyrs' Day, observed to mark the death anniversary of the father of the nation, at Rajghat, on Tuesday *—PTI PHOTO*

Ker: Govt, Oppn spar with each other over economic woes

T'PURAM, 30 JAN

The ruling Left in Kerala and Congress-led UDF on Tuesday sparred in the Assembly over financial health of the state, with the opposition members finally walking out of the House in protest, alleging a lack of any plan on the part of the government to improve the state's plight.

State Finance Minister KN Balagopal denied any mismanagement or extravagance on the part of the government, as claimed by UDF, and squarely blamed the Centre's policies and neglect towards Kerala for its economic woes.

On the other hand, the UDF opposition, which moved an adjournment notice in the morning to suspend the scheduled business of the House and discuss the issue, alleged that the Left administration failed in tax administration and collection, and that it was one of the main reasons for the state's financial woes.

Denying the allegations, the government contended that the opposition's claims of state functioning coming to a halt were false and that Kerala has seen development in education, health, infrastructure and basic facilities despite the financial woes. *—PTI*

Didi takes padayatra in Bengal

CHOPRA, 30 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Tuesday undertook a padayatra in the northern part of the state.

Banerjee, who is currently in northern West Bengal for an administrative visit, took out the 'Jonosanjog Yatra' in Chopra town in Uttar Dinajpur. Later, she undertook another yatra in nearby Islampur.

As Banerjee traversed through Chopra town, she waved at onlookers and greeted them with folded hands. She was welcomed by party leaders and greeted by locals, including women and children, during the yatra.

Many were seen chanting 'Didi... Didi', while others showered flowers and some blew conch shells as the yatra passed through various localities.

TMC supporters carrying flags raised slogans, hailing Banerjee and the party.Flanked by security guards, Banerjee interacted with locals. *—PTI*

BHUJBAL DID NOTHING FOR OBCS: JARANGE

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

Maratha quota activist Manoj Jarange on Tuesday claimed the OBCs have realised that Maharashtra cabinet minister Chhagan Bhujbal did nothing for them and they will not feel bad if he steps down from his post. Notably, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's recent announcement that Marathas will be given all benefits enjoyed by the Other Backward Classes (OBCs) till they get the reservation has evoked criticism from Bhujbal.

A draft notification has been issued by the government following negotiations with Jarange, stating that blood relatives of a Maratha person, who has records to show that he belongs to the agrarian Kunbi community, would also be recognised as Kunbi.

An agrarian community, Kunbi falls in the OBC category, and Jarange, who is spearheading the agitation for reservation for the Marathas since last August, has been demanding Kunbi certificates for all Marathas. Senior OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal has said protests will be held outside the residences of MLAs, MPs and tehsildars on 1 February. *—PTI*

BJP to Kharge: Polls will end dynastic politics

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Hitting back at Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge for his "last election" barb, the BJP on Tuesday said dynastic politics under the garb of democracy is coming to an end in the country and emergence of true democracy is in the offing.

Kharge on Monday had expressed apprehension that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections would be the last opportunity for the people to save democracy, and "If Narendra Modi wins another election, there will be dictatorship in the country. The BJP will rule India like Putin in Russia."

Slamming Kharge for the remarks, BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi said, "Dynastic politics under the garb of democracy is coming to an end, and they are wondering what will be their future".

"Whether it is Abdullah and Mufti families in Jammu and Kashmir, or Badals in Punjab, Hooda family in Haryana, all of them lost elections.

Ashok Gehlot's son also lost, Akhilesh Yadav's wife lost election, in Bihar Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter lost election... or the biggest symbol of dynastic politics Rahul Gandhi lost election," Trivedi said.

"Whatever Kharge ji is saying, the real meaning is dynastic politics under the garb of democracy has been totally discarded by voters in the last election.... and the true emergence of true democracy is in the offing".

Trivedi asserted that "only two prime ministers were elected democratically in India, Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Narendra Modi. *—PTI*

'GUV RAVI SUFFERING FROM MANIA FOR SPACE IN MEDIA'

CHENNAI, 30 JAN

Governor RN Ravi is suffering from the disease of 'mania' for daily space in the media, and there appears to be an 'indirect competition' among the Governors of Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Kerala for garnering more space in the media, Tamil Nadu Law Minister S Regupathy has alleged.

By criticising the state government, Ravi, Tamilisai Soundararajan and Arif Mohammed Khan, the Governors of Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Kerala attempt to "get attention from the media and are behaving like the spokespersons of the BJP, forgetting that they are Governors," the minister said.Slamming Ravi for alleging administrative apathy and corruption in the implementation of Prime Minister Awas Yojana in Nagapattinam district, he demanded to know the basis on which the governor hurled such an accusation. *—PTI*

UGC removes 'de-reservation' draft guidelines

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

The University Grants Commission (UGC) on Tuesday removed from its website, the draft guidelines suggesting "de-reservation" of reserved posts if enough candidates from the SC, ST and OBC categories are not available, amid a controversy over the issue.

The commission chairman, M Jagadesh Kumar, however, said "the guidelines have been removed from the website as the time period for stakeholders to submit their feedback is over".

A controversy erupted on Sunday over UGC's draft guidelines proposing that any vacancy reserved for SC, ST and OBC candidates can be "declared unreserved" if enough candidates from these categories are not available, with the Congress terming it a conspiracy to do away with quota in higher education institutions.

Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan clarified that not a single post will be de-reserved and there is no scope for ambiguity about reservations after the introduction of the Central Educational Institutions (Reservation in Teachers' Cadre) Act, 2019.

University Grants Commission (UGC) Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar also made it clear that there has been no de-reservation of reserved category positions in Central Educational Institutions (CEI) in the past and there is "going to be no such de-reservation".

- The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) also staged a protest against the UGC chairman on the issue on Monday

The draft guidelines have drawn flak from several quarters. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the BJP is "only busy snatching the jobs of youths".

The JNU Students' Union (JNUSU) also staged a protest against the UGC chairman on the issue on Monday.

Stepping up an attack, the Congress on Monday demanded the dismissal of UGC Chairman M Jagadesh Kumar over the draft guidelines for "de-reservation" of posts in higher education institutions, with party leader Rahul Gandhi alleging it was a "conspiracy" to end the reservation given to SC, ST and OBC categories.

Pradhan, however, hit back at Gandhi saying his politics is completely based on lies.

The minister said that of the 6,080 appointments made, the participation of Scheduled Caste (SC) is 14.3 per cent, Scheduled Tribe (ST) 7 per cent and Other Backward Classes (OBC) is 23.42 per cent. *—PTI*

MOSQUE ROW

Hindu plantiffs file new SC plea on Gyanvapi mosque

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Hindu women plaintiffs have moved the Supreme Court seeking direction to the Archeological Survey of India to determine the nature and associated features of a 'Shivling', claimed to have been found at Varanasi's Gyanvapi mosque, in the sealed area.

In a separate application, the four Hindu women, who are the original plaintiffs in the suit pending before the Varanasi court, also sought vacation of the top court's 19 May, 2023, order by which it had deferred the scientific survey, including carbon dating, to determine the age of the 'Shivling' as directed by the Allahabad High Court on 12 May,2023.The plaintiffs submitted that the exact nature of the 'Shivling' can be determined after removing the artificial/modern walls/floors surrounding it and by undertaking a survey of the entire sealed area by excavation and using other scientific methods.The application filed through advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain said the direction be issued to the ASI to submit a report within the time provided by the court."It is submitted that for a proper and effective investigation, it is necessary that the ASI may be directed to undertake necessary excavation and use other scientific methods

The application said that excavation is required to find out original structure of the 'Shivlingam' and its associated features *PHOTO: PTI*

around the Shivlingam (being claimed by Muslims as a fountain) for determining the nature of Shivlingam and associated features without causing any damage to the object after removing artificial/modern walls/floors surrounding the Shivlingam," it said.The application said that such excavation/scientific prospection is required to find out the original structure of the 'Shivlingam' and its associated features.The applications have been filed in the top court, days after an order of the Varanasi court which ruled that the ASI survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque complex adjoining the Kashi Vishwanath Temple here will be given to both the Hindu and Muslim sides.In the two applications, the women plaintiffs said that on the orders of the Varanasi civil court, the advocate commissioners conducted a survey during which on 16 May, 2022, a big 'Shivling' under a pond was discovered. *—PTI*

Kid injured in attack by classmate in M'rashtra school

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

A 14-year-old student of Class 8 received injuries after a fellow student allegedly attacked him with a sharp object inside the classroom of a school in Maharashtra's Sangli. The incident took place on Monday and it was the fallout of a previous dispute between the two classmates. The accused and the victim, who is a resident of 100 Feet Road area in Sangli, used to have quarrels over minor issues and they also had an argument two days ago, the official said. On Monday, the accused boy carried a sharp object, presumably a small knife, in his school bag. At around 5.30 pm, he allegedly attacked his classmate with the sharp object while the latter was sitting on a bench. The victim received severe injuries on his neck and hands. The school administration immediately took the injured boy to a private hospital for treatment. The boy was given stitches for a wound. He is undergoing treatment in the hospital and his condition is stable, inspector Sanjay More from the City police station in Sangli said. *—PTI*

2 found dead on tracks near Kasaragod

KASARAGOD, 30 JAN

Two men were found dead on the tracks near Kasaragod railway station here on Tuesday, police said. The bodies, suspected to have been hit by a goods train, were found this morning in separate locations along the railway line. The identities of the deceased remain unknown, police said. Upon receiving the information about the incident, both the Kasaragod town police and Railway Protection Force (RPF) officials reached the spot. One body was found in the middle of the tracks, while the other a short distance away, lying by the side of the railway line, they said. Police said they are currently investigating the circumstances surrounding these deaths.*—PTI*

Before dying of heart attack, bus driver saves 60 lives

BALASORE, 30 JAN

A man died after suffering a heart attack while driving a bus, but not before stopping the vehicle on time, saving the lives of over 60 passengers in Odisha's Balasore district on Tuesday, police said. The incident took place at Patapur Chhak in Odisha's Balasore district early on Tuesday. Quoting preliminary information, police said that the bus carrying tourists from West Bengal was proceeding towards Panchalingeswar Temple in the district when the driver suffered a heart attack. As soon as he felt pain, the driver stopped the bus on the side of the road and lost consciousness. Panicked passengers called the local people who rushed the driver identified as Sheikh Akhtar to the nearby Nilgiri sub-divisional hospital. He was declared dead by doctors, police said. Amit Das, one of the passengers said that the driver suddenly became sick and halted the bus. As soon as the vehicle stopped on one side of the road, he fainted. He was rushed to the hospital by local people where doctors pronounced him dead. *—PTI*

Teacher shoots 2 dead at Jharkhand school, then kills self

RANCHI, 30 JAN

A teacher allegedly shot dead two colleagues at a government school in Jharkhand's Godda district, before turning the gun on himself and suffering serious injuries, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place at Upgraded High School in Poraiyahat area, around 300 km from Ranchi, during school hours around 11 am, a police officer said. Godda Superintendent of Police Nathu Singh Meena told PTI, "The bodies of two teachers, including a woman, were found lying in a pool of blood in a room at the school, while the accused teacher was also found seriously injured." *—PTI*

Self-reporting of mental illness below 1%: Study

The data was collected from 5,55,115 individuals

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

The data collected randomly selected 8,077 villages and 6,181 urban areas *PHOTO: PIXABAY*

- The private sector accounts for 66.1 per cent of outpatient care and 59.2 per cent of inpatient care

The self-reporting rate of mental illness in India is less than one per cent and the private sector is a major provider of mental health services in the country, a study by Indian Institute of Technology, Jodhpur and USA's Ohio State University found.

The data was collected from 5,55,115 individuals (3,25,232 rural and 2,29,232 urban), from randomly selected 8,077 villages and 6,181 urban areas, including 283 outpatient and 374 hospitalisation cases due to mental disorders in India.

"Stigma in society acts as a significant barrier to reporting mental health issues. In today's society, the reluctance to report mental health issues persists due to the prevailing stigma. Individuals, fearing social judgement, often choose silence over seeking help. Destigmatising mental health is crucial to fostering an environment where seeking support is embraced," the report said. The study shed light on the significant out-of-pocket expenses incurred by individuals seeking mental health services, largely due to reliance on the private sector.

The private sector accounts for 66.1 per cent of outpatient care and 59.2 per cent of inpatient care.

Individuals with higher incomes were 1.73 times more inclined to report health problems compared to those with lower incomes "The research revealed that self-reporting of mental disorders in India is considerably lower than the actual burden of the disease. This disparity suggests a significant gap in identifying and addressing mental health issues," it said.

Besides low self-reporting of mental disorders, the study has flagged socio economic disparities, dominance of the private sector, limited health insurance coverage and high out-of-pocket expenditure, among top concerns about mental illness.

"A mere 23 per cent of individuals hospitalised for mental disorders had health insurance coverage at the national level. The study revealed that average out-of-pocket expenditures for both hospitalisation and outpatient care were significantly higher in the private sector than in the public sector," the report added.

The 2017 National Mental Health Survey by The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro-Sciences (NIMHANS), indicated that around 197.3 million individuals had a mental disorder in India. *—PTI*

India ranks 93rd in corruption index

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

- The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people, uses a scale of 0 to 100

India ranked 93 out of 180 countries on the corruption perceptions index for 2023 as its overall score remained largely unchanged, according to a Transparency International report.

The index, which ranks 180 countries and territories by their perceived levels of public sector corruption according to experts and business people, uses a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. In 2023, India's overall score was 39 while in 2022, it was 40. India's rank in 2022 was 85.

In South Asia, both Pakistan (133) and Sri Lanka (115) grapple with their respective debt burdens and ensuing political instability, it said.

The report said as Bangladesh (149) emerges from the least developed country (LDC) status.

Noting that China (76) has made headlines with its aggressive anti-corruption crackdown by punishing more than 3.7 million public officials for corruption over the last decade, the report said a closer study of the cases with guilty verdicts found that public officials often use corruption as a way to drive up their income. "Countries with continued high scores, such as New Zealand (3) and Singapore (5), maintain their positions at the top of the index globally, followed closely by other countries Australia (14), Hong Kong (14), Japan (16), Bhutan (26), Taiwan (28) and South Korea (32)," it said. *—PTI*

NMC mandates 75% attendance for faculty

This step that will help deal with the problem of ghost faculty *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

National Medical Commission (NMC) has barred the faculty in medical colleges from engaging in private practice during college hours. They also made 75 per cent attendance mandatory for them, a step that will help deal with the problem of ghost faculty.

The medical regulator issued the "Minimum Standard of Requirements for Postgraduate Courses-2023 (PGMSR-2023)" guidelines last week. The guidelines also stipulated that 80 per cent of hospital beds should be occupied throughout the year by patients requiring inpatient care and minimum 15 per cent of the total beds in the department imparting post-graduate training should be Intensive Care Unit (ICU) beds/high dependency unit (HDU) beds exclusively of that department.

The guidelines stated that hospital building shall conform to existing national building norms and various local statutory regulations for hospitals taking into consideration requirements of the hospital as a service provider, including administration, registration, records storage, out-patient and inpatient areas, operating theatres, ICU, radiology and laboratory services and emergency areas, etc.

There shall be an increase in the faculty, infrastructure and other staff in subjects of radio-diagnosis, anaesthesia, pathology, microbiology, and biochemistry with the increase in the number of beds in the hospital. *—PTI*

8 interfaith couples' plea for protection junked

PRAYAGRAJ, 30 JAN

Allahabad High Court has refused to grant relief on the petition filed by a couple demanding security after an inter-religious marriage. The court has said that the marriage of the couple did not comply with the provisions of the Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Religious Conversion Act. Justice Saral Srivastava gave the order rejecting the separate petitions of many petitioners from Moradabad and other districts. The couple had urged the court to ask the family to stop interference in their marital life and demanded security for their safety, citing the threat to their lives. The court said that this was a case of the marriage of a couple of opposite religions. The legal process of religious conversion was not followed before marriage. Therefore, this marriage is not valid under the law, the court said, adding that the anti-conversion law was not followed in this marriage. However, the court said that if the petitioners get married after following due process of law, they can seek protection afresh. *—ANI*

Suspended prison terms for 10 fishermen

The trawler has been detained *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Ten Indian fishermen were sentenced to a two-year suspended prison term by a Sri Lankan court for poaching in the island nation's waters.

The magistrate in Point Pedro on Monday also ordered the owner of the trawler to be present at the court on 24 October. The trawler has been detained in a case of illegal fishing.

The 'two-year prison term suspended for five years' means that the fishermen don't go to jail actually but the sentence is suspended after five years.

The fishermen, arrested by the Sri Lanka Navy on 23 December, have attended the Point Pedro court three times.

The magistrate Ponnuthurai Krishanth ordered the police to return their personal belongings seized by the Navy.

The fishermen sentenced to suspended jail terms would be sent to the immigration detention centre in Colombo's suburb of Mirihana until formalities could be conducted to repatriate them.

The fishermen issue is a contentious one in the ties between India and Sri Lanka, with Lankan Navy personnel even firing at Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait and seizing their boats in several alleged incidents of illegally entering Sri Lankan territorial waters. *—PTI*

JNU student activist Sharjeel Imam *PHOTO: PTI*

HC asks court to decide on Sharjeel's bail plea

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Delhi High Court on Tuesday directed the trial court to decide by next month a plea by student activist Sharjeel Imam seeking bail in 2020 communal riots case. It involves allegations of sedition and unlawful activities.

A bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Manoj Jain was informed by the counsel for Imam that his plea before the trial court is listed in February.

The matter is listed before the trial court on 7 February.

Imam has sought bail under section 436A of the CrPC on the grounds that he has been in custody for the last four years and the maximum sentence for the offence under section 13 (punishment for unlawful activities) of Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act is seven years, if convicted.

He said he has undergone more than half of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offence and is entitled for bail under the provision.

According to Section 436-A CrPC, a person can be released from custody if he has spent more than half of the maximum sentence prescribed for the offence. High Court, while disposing of Imam's plea challenging a trial court's 24 January, 2022 order denying him bail, said if he is granted bail by the lower court.

If he is denied bail, he has a right to file an appeal of the grounds already mentioned in the plea or any other ground, it said. During the hearing, Imam's counsel informed the court that there are a total of 43 prosecution witnesses in the case, out of which 22 have been examined till now. *—PTI*

SHAHI IDGAH CASE: ALLAHABAD HC TO HEAR PLEA

PRAYAGRAJ, 30 JAN

The Allahabad High Court on Tuesday fixed February 22 for hearing a plea regarding maintainability of a suit seeking removal of Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura which it claims has been built on 13.37 acre land of Katra Keshav Deo temple.

The high court passed the order after the Hindu side failed to file its reply on the plea challenging maintainability of the suit. Justice Mayank Kumar Jain said that the application regarding maintainability of the suit has to be filed in between and the court will hear the issue on 22 February. On 17 January, the court had given time to the Hindu side to file its reply on the application of the Muslim side moved regarding maintainability of the suit. A copy of the Supreme Court order was submitted on that day by which an earlier order of the high court dated 14 December last year regarding the survey of the mosque complex adjoining the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi temple was stayed.

On 14 December, 2023, the court allowed a court-monitored survey of the Shahi Idgah complex and agreed to the appointment of an advocate commissioner to oversee the survey of the mosque premises, which the petitioners claim holds signs suggesting that it was a Hindu temple once. *—PTI*

PROTEST FOR JOBS

Aspirants during their protest alleging fewer vacancies for Assistant Loco Pilot recruitment in Railways, in Patna on Tuesday *PHOTO:PTI*

J&K: 40-day winter period 'Chilla-i-Kalan' ends

SRINAGAR, 30 JAN

The 40-day harsh winter period known as 'Chilla-i-Kalan' ended on Tuesday with no snowfall in the plains of Kashmir and below normal precipitation in the higher reaches of the valley, officials said.

While there was light to moderate snowfall in the higher reaches of the valley at the fag-end of the 40-day period, most of the Chilla-i-Kalan – when the chances of snowfall are maximum and most frequent – remained dry.

During the 40-day harsh winter period, a cold wave sweeps the region and temperatures drop considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies and water in supply pipes.

The cold conditions continue in Kashmir even after the culmination of 'Chilla-i-Kalan' with a 20-day 'Chilla-i-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day 'Chilla-i-Bachha' (baby cold).

- Cold wave sweeps the region and temperatures drop considerably leading to the freezing of water bodies

Meanwhile, Srinagar, the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, recorded a low of 0.8 degrees Celsius – down from 3.6 degrees Celsius on the previous night. The weatherman has forecast a possibility of light to moderate rain/snow at several places in the Union Territory from Tuesday afternoon onwards till 1 February, with chances of heavy snowfall over a few higher reaches in Kupwara, Bandipora, Baramulla, Ganderbal, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag districts with peak activity on 31 January. *—PTI*

'COMPETITIVE POLITICS'

S Jaishankar *PHOTO: PTI*

We shouldn't be scared of Beijing, says EAM

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Tuesday said it was necessary to acknowledge that China will influence India's neighbouring countries, and India must not be scared of such "competitive politics".

There are problems in every neighbourhood, but ultimately "neighbours need each other", he said when asked about the strained ties with the Maldives at an interactive session with students at the Indian Institute of Management, Mumbai.

There is competition with regard to the growing Chinese influence in the region, but it would be wrong to term it a failure of Indian diplomacy, Jaishankar said.

Being a major economy, China will deploy resources and try to shape things in its way, he said, adding, "why should we expect otherwise, but the answer to that is not to complain that China is doing it," Jaishankar said.

Talking about India's track record of helping its neighbours, he cited the example of Sri Lanka which was provided assistance by New Delhi when the island nation was hit by a grave economic crisis. To a question about the 'India Out' campaign in the Maldives, Jaishankar urged the audience to "trust" Indian diplomacy. Sharp positions are taken in politics, and diplomacy does not always goes by those sharp positions, he pointed out. *—PTI*

WAS NO. 1 IN 2023

India drops to 5th in Maldives tourism rankings

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

From being the top tourist group visiting Maldives, Indians have slipped to the fifth position in the last three weeks, amid a diplomatic row between New Delhi and Male, according to official data.

Official figures released by the Maldives Ministry of Tourism showed a notable drop in the number of Indian travellers visiting the island nation.

Over 2 lakh Indians visited Maldives annually in the last three years, the highest from any country post-Covid 19 pandemic, the data showed.

According to the statistics, Maldives received over 1.74 lakh tourists till 28 January this year, of which only 13,989 were Indians.

However, the travel hotspot for Indians is now facing a backlash after three ministers from the Maldives cabinet made derogatory comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi following his visit to Lakshadweep earlier this month.

PHOTO: PRITAM NANDI

Russia topped the chart with 18,561 tourists from the country visiting Maldives, followed by Italy (18,111), China (16,529) and UK (14,588). Maldives was also one of the few countries open for international tourists during the pandemic and nearly 63,000 Indians visited that country during that period.

In 2019, India reached the second spot with 1.66 lakh Indians visiting that country. Many netizens on social media claimed that they have cancelled their scheduled trips to the Maldives because of the row, with the hashtag "Boycott Maldives" trending on X for several days this month.

Joining the 'boycott campaign', EaseMyTrip, an online travel aggregator, had announced it has suspended all flight bookings to the island nation on its website "in solidarity" with India. *—PTI*

SEA FRIENDS

A boat makes it's way through a pod of common dolphins fleeing from an Orca off of Point Loma in San Diego. The pod has been sighted in the waters off of Southern California since December 2023. Marine biologists believe that the Orcas may stay around for a while due to abundance of their preferred food, common dolphins
PHOTO: PTI

I want to fight for Israel: voice of an Indian lost tribe

Joseph Haokip, an undergraduate student in Manipur, is excited at the thought of going to Israel. He is ready to join the Israeli army to fight Hamas in a war in which Israel's brutal assault on Gaza has killed more than 26,000 people, mostly women and children.

The 20-year-old and his family have recently returned to their home in the Kangpokpi district of Manipur after five months in the neighbouring state of Mizoram where they had fled when an ethnic conflict broke out in Manipur last year.

"I stayed in a makeshift camp with the other members of the Bnei Menashe community since August last year and have just returned a few days ago. But I want to go to Israel and connect with my lost tribe. I also want to join the [Israeli army] and help them in fighting against Hamas because I belong from that land," Haokip told Al Jazeera.

Rafael Khiangte, a taxi driver in Aizawla is mong 5,000 people living in the Indian states of Manipur and Mizoram who believe they are the descendants of the Manasseh
PHOTO: AP

Rafael Khiangte, 37, a taxi driver in Aizawl, Mizoram's capital, wants to move to Israel along with his wife and toddler to connect with his ancestral roots and reunite with his mother.Khiangte's mother Sarah Pachuau, 58, relocated to Israel along with her brother in 1993. "I belong from the lost tribe and want to stay with my mother and also provide a better future to my daughter … I want to reunite with the land from where we got separated over 2,700 years ago," Khiangte said.

The lost tribe

Khiangte and Haokip are among about 5,000 people living in the Indian states of Manipur and Mizoram who believe they are the descendants of the Manasseh, one of the biblical lost tribes of Israel exiled in 722 BC by Assyrian conquerors and commonly referred to as the Bnei Menashe community, or Hebrew for the children of Manasseh, the first son of Joseph.

PC Biaksiama, a Christian researcher based in Aizawl, told Al Jazeera that several members from the Chin, Kuki and Mizo ethnic groups believe themselves to be the descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.During the ancient times, Israel was divided into two kingdoms. The southern one was known as the Kingdom of Judah and mostly comprised the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, while the northern part was made up of the so-called 10 tribes, he said.

The Assyrians invaded the northern kingdom and exiled the tribes living there. Several of them fled and settled in different parts of the world. According to the Bnei Menashe, they were dispersed to China from where they ended up in northeast India.

Israel's 1950 Law of Return allowed Jews, people with one or more Jewish grandparent and their spouses the right to relocate to Israel and acquire citizenship there. It also opened the doors to bring the lost tribes back.In India, claims of being a descendant of the lost tribes began in 1951 when a tribal leader, Mela Chala, had a dream that his ancient homeland was Israel. Since then, many people in northeast India, mostly in the states of Manipur and Mizoram, have embraced Judaism and its customs and traditions.

Relocating to Israel

Professor Shalva Weil, a senior researcher at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, told Al Jazeera that she had introduced Israeli Rabbi Eliyahu Avichail to the Bnai Menashe tribe for the first time during their visit to India in 1980.

"I had introduced him with the community though I was not very much convinced of their claims of the lost tribe as they had no documentary evidence to support it apart from their religious rituals like maintaining Sabbath and legends that they had crossed the Red Sea and originated from the 10 lost tribes," Weil said.

But the Bnei Menashe started coming to Israel in the 1980s. In 1991, when Weil opened an exhibition on the legend of the 10 lost tribes at the Museum of the Jewish Diaspora – today called the Anu Museum – in Tel Aviv, 12 people from the community turned up, she recalled.

"Slowly, the numbers started swelling, which rose further after the chief rabbinate of Israel accepted them as Jews in 2005. Around 3,500 have already arrived from India in the past three decades," she added.

For those hoping to "return" to Israel, they have to first make the aliyah – Hebrew for "ascent" or "rise", but used to mean "a move to Israel". The first aliyah – which mainly involves Israeli authorities checking documents including a conversion to Judaism certificate issued by a rabbi and interviews before qualifying to shift to Israel – took place in India in 2006. In the last aliyah in 2021, 150 people went to Israel.While all Jews are eligible to make aliyah, the final decision on whether to absorb them depends on the government of Israel. In September 2023, a committee of the Israeli parliament, known as the Knesset, debated the delays in allowing the Bnei Menashe to make aliyah. In the past five years, 1,421 members of the community have moved to Israel.

—Courtesy,Al Jazeera

LETTERS

Write to us at salar@salar.news

SALAR ساڈھ

AI to speed up production in Kashmir's carpet industry

An ancient symbolic code lies behind the intricate patterns of Kashmir's traditional hand-woven carpets and rugs.

Called talim, the code has been used for hundreds of years to design carpets and convey information to weavers.

From the age of eight, and following in the footsteps of his father, Mohammad Rafiq Sofi has been weaving carpets using talim designs.

"It took me five years to learn how to weave properly," says Sofi, now 57.

Much has changed during his half century in the industry. Sofi says that in the early days it could take more than six months to complete a carpet.

To start the process, a designer would draw up a carpet. A talim expert would then encode that design, and in small sections send it off for weaving.

Those chunks of code would be translated for Sofi and weavers like him, showing them where to knot each thread and which colour to use.

Each section would only represent a small piece of the carpet, so hundreds would be needed for the whole carpet, with much back and forth between the designers and weavers.

The process made mistakes difficult to spot and time-consuming to correct.

But these days computer software has streamlined the process and Sofi can finish a carpet in six weeks.

The weaving and knotting is still done by hand, but now computer software handles the design and creation of the talim code. It means Sofi can see the whole design at once, instead of just small sections.

Any potential problems can be spotted in advance, cutting down on time-consuming errors.

"This innovation in handmade carpets is not to disrupt the essence of artistic carpets, it's just to speed up the process - designs being available now at a speed," says Mehmood Shah, the director of Handloom & Handicrafts for the government of Jammu and Kashmir.

The latest innovation comes from technology firms that are applying artificial intelligence to the process.

Aby Mathew is chief operating officer at International Virtual Assistance, a computer software firm that specialises in analysing data.

His company is training an artificial intelligence (AI) system to understand the talim code by showing it picture of carpets and lines of talim code.

The AI is still being developed and the process will still require a human to write the code, but Mathew says it should speed up manufacturing by decoding the talim instructions for the weavers.

"Weavers will be able to try out new patterns, update classic themes to suit contemporary tastes, and produce one-of-a-kind, custom carpets," says Mathew.

As India grows richer he sees an increasing demand for carpets that the traditional industry will struggle to meet."The tastes of customers are evolving, with a growing desire for carpets that are fashionable, long-lasting, and low maintenance. Conventional carpet-making techniques are frequently labour-intensive and sluggish - they might not be able to satisfy these needs," says Mathew.Aditya Gupta founded Rug Republic 32 years ago, it now employs around 5,000 people and makes up to 15,000 rugs per month. He says the Indian rug and carpet industry is facing stiff competition from rivals in Turkey and China and needs to keep up with the latest manufacturing techniques.

"Innovation is important in every industry - without it, we die," he says."The Indian carpet industry is an interesting case, where it is not only about moving forward with new tech, but rather moving the old and the new hand in hand."The innovation now is oriented towards creating designs that cannot be copied by machines while still using traditional techniques."At Rug Republic, new tech has been introduced for the design, washing and drying of carpets and for monitoring moisture levels. As well as the traditional wool, materials like recycled jeans, cotton and leather have been experimented with.Despite all the innovation, Gupta still values the old methods."The manufacturing side of things still needs to be traditional and handmade as that is the main charm the consumers seek."The industry has also been helped by an official tagging system which identifies a genuine hand-knotted Kashmiri carpets.By scanning a QR code buyers can verify the carpet designer and how it was made."If the [Handicrafts] department hadn't taken this step, maybe this trade in handwoven carpets would have died in a few years," says carpet designer, Shahnawaz Ahmad.That would have been a blow as the industry is an important part of the local economy. It employs around 50 thousand workers in Jammu and Kashmir, who collectively produce rugs and carpets worth around £36m ($28m) a year.

—BBC News

As India grows richer there is an increasing demand for carpets that the traditional industry will struggle to meet
PHOTO: PTI

How is stress impacting the younger generations?

Meghana AT, a theater artist from Mumbai, is the creator of an interactive show "Plan B/C/D/E." Throughout the performance, she talks about her climate anxiety and tries to come up with solutions to deal with the threat of climate change together with her audience.

"I love asking people in the audience when was the first time they heard about climate change," the 28-year-old told DW. "While older people say they heard about it in their 40s or 50s, many younger people like me have grown up hearing about it, to the extent that we don't remember a life where we didn't know about climate change. We've literally never known a world that wasn't on the precipice."

"We have a lot more access to information and news from across the world. It is important to stay informed and aware, but sometimes it can be too overwhelming," she added.

A study conducted by ICICI Lombard, one of India's largest general insurers, suggested that Gen Z and millennial Indians are far more prone to stress and anxiety than older generations.

About 77 per cent of Indians displayed at least one symptom of stress, and one in every third Indian was struggling with stress and anxiety. But younger Indians, particularly from the Gen Z cohort, were more likely to be affected by stress, anxiety and chronic illnesses, said the study.

Modi's recipe

Prime Minister Narendra Modi appears eager to confront the crisis. Since 2018, he has held annual events at which he speaks with students, parents and teachers from all over India, answering their questions and offering advice on how pupils preparing for university entrance or board examinations can reduce stress in their daily lives.

The 2024 event was held in New Delhi on Monday. During the event, Modi warned that "pressure should not be so high that it affects one's capabilities" and students should "not stretch to extreme levels." He also urged parents, relatives and teachers to abstain from a "running commentary" on the students' performance, saying it invites "negative comparisons" and is "detrimental to student's mental well-being."

In a 2021 survey by the Live Laugh Love Foundation, 92 per cent of respondents were willing to seek treatment for themselves or someone they knew
PHOTO: PTI

What is causing all this stress?

Mohit, a 24-year-old from New Delhi, told DW that many of his peers found it hard to transition from the world of education into the early stages of their careers. "Most of my college education happened during the pandemic. After things opened up again, I was suddenly a working professional," he said. "I also feel a lot of workplaces are toxic and have a poor work-life balance. My generation is just not going to put up with this."

This sentiment is supported by the study, which indicated a decline in wellbeing at the workplace, especially for female and Gen Z workers. The pandemic "has fundamentally changed workplaces, with employees expecting better mental wellbeing," the survey said.

"There is some pressure to align with the hustle culture — where young people feel the need to push themselves constantly," Pratishtha Trivedi Mirza, senior clinical psychologist at the mental health organisation Amaha, told DW. "It manifests as anxiety about not doing enough or not achieving as much as they think they should,"

"In addition, young people often also compare themselves to their peers or even idols [such as] celebrities, influencers, relevant industry people, and end up negatively evaluating their own selves — resulting in a low sense of self-worth and self-esteem issues," she added.

What's the point in having children?'

A report by Sapien Labs Centre for the Human Brain and Mind of Krea University said across income levels, about 51% of Indian youth (defined as aged 18–24) were struggling or distressed. The report was based on information collected from respondents who had internet access between April 2020 and August 2023. It also showed a decline in mental well-being after the pandemic.

"At my age, my parents were ready to get married and start a family. But I don't think I am ready for any such adult behavior. What's the point in having children? It's all bad news everywhere, there's nothing to be hopeful about," Anisha, a 22-year-old student from Bengaluru told DW."It feels like everyone is living a better life than me whenever I open social media. But you can't really avoid being on social media either," she added.

Clinical psychologist Mirza said social conflicts and wars in different parts of the world are also part of the equation.

"Gen Z and millennials are more connected to the world through social media. It also manifests as privilege guilt when youngsters feel that they have some opportunities and resources which others don't. Overall global situations — wars in different countries, and other social political conflicts and the uncertainties that these issues bring — are also contributing to stress in the younger generation," Mirza explained.

Many more people willing to get help

Indians are growing increasingly aware of the significance of mental health and well-being. In a 2021 survey by the Live Laugh Love Foundation, an organisation that works to raise awareness for mental health, 92 per cent of respondents were willing to seek treatment for themselves or someone they knew, up from 54 per cent in 2018. While the study only covered metropolitan cities, it showed an uptick in general awareness, specially among younger generations. However, this awareness has yet to translate into better mental health for young Indians, Mirza pointed out. "While young people are more able to recognise and understand mental health concerns," she said.

—Courtesy, DW News

5 terrorists killed in Balochistan's Mach jail

KARACHI, 30 JAN

At least five terrorists of a banned group were killed when Pakistani security forces thwarted at least three coordinated attacks with rockets and sophisticated weapons by militants on a high-security jail in the country's restive Balochistan province, authorities said on Tuesday. A senior police official said at least 15 rockets were fired at the Central Mach Jail on Monday night where some dangerous militants and death row prisoners have been incarcerated. Balochistan's caretaker Information Minister Jan Achakzai said the Pakistan Army and Frontier Constabulary Balochistan acted swiftly to thwart the attacks during the night. "Five militants of the Balochistan Liberation Army were killed by security forces during the attack," he said. "They fired rockets at the Mach jail building but couldn't hit the target," he added. —*PTI*

Russian Oppn head Kara-Murza moved to another prison

TALLINN, 30 JAN

Lawyers for prominent Russian opposition figure Vladimir Kara-Murza Jr, who is serving a 25-year sentence for treason, said on Tuesday that he has been transferred to another prison in Siberia and placed in solitary confinement again, for at least four months, over an alleged minor infraction. The move comes amid unrelenting pressure on Russian dissidents at home and abroad that has intensified significantly since President Vladimir Putin sent troops into Ukraine almost two years ago. Kara-Murza, 42, was held in a prison in the Omsk region, but his supporters said on Monday he apparently was no longer there. Kara-Murza lawyer Maria Eismont told Russia's independent Novaya Gazeta newspaper on Tuesday that she had received a letter from him in which he said he was transferred to another penal colony in the city of Omsk. —*AP*

PHOTO: X

Indian student who went missing in US confirmed dead

WASHINGTON, 30 JAN

An Indian student pursuing a double major at the prestigious Purdue University in the US state of Indiana, who went missing on Sunday, has been confirmed dead, the university has said. Tippecanoe County Coroner's Office officials were called around 11:30 a.m. on Sunday to 500 Allison Road in West Lafayette for a possible dead body. Upon arrival, a "college-aged male" was found deceased outside Maurice J. Zucrow Laboratories on Purdue's campus. Neel Acharya went missing on Sunday. "It is with great sadness that I inform you that one of our students Neel Acharya has passed away," Chris Clifton, interim head of the university's Computer Science Department, said. —*PTI*

N Korea fired 3rd round of cruise missiles: S Korea

SEOUL, 30 JAN

South Korea's military detected North Korea firing multiple cruise missiles into the sea off its western coast Tuesday in its third round of tests of such weapons this month. The launches came amid heightened tensions in the region, where the pace of both North Korea's weapons demonstrations and the United States' combined military exercises with allies South Korea and Japan have intensified in a tit-for-tat. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said the South Korean and US militaries were analysing the launches. It didn't immediately provide specific flight details, including the number of missiles fired and how far they flew. The launches follow tests on January 24 and January 28 of what North Korea has described as a new cruise missile developed for submarine launches. —*AP*

Ex-Pak PM, Ex-FM sentenced to 10-year prison term

Imran Khan gets the jail term for exposing official secrets

ISLAMABAD, 30 JAN

Jailed former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan and ex-foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi were on Tuesday sentenced to 10 years each in prison for leaking state secrets.

The verdict was pronounced ahead of the February 8 general elections. The decision to sentence the two leaders was announced by special court Judge Abul Hasnat Zulqarnain during the hearing of the case held at the special court in Adiala Jail at Rawalpindi established under the Official Secrets Act. Khan is already serving a three-year jail term after being convicted of corruption.

Khan's party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf (PTI) party has faced numerous troubles starting with the denial of its election symbol, the cricket bat, to the rejection of nomination papers of Khan, Qureshi and a number of other party leaders. The cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable -- the cipher -- that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022, and naming the US, had claimed that it was 'evidence' of an "international conspiracy" to topple his government.

The case was filed against Khan, 71, and Qureshi, 67, on August 15 last year by the Federal Investigation Agency, which accused both of violating the secrecy laws while handling the cable sent by the Pakistan embassy in Washington in March 2022. The PTI leaders confirmed the development by saying that it was a "sham case with no access to media or public."

"Legal team will challenge the decision in a higher court and hopefully will get this sentence suspended, given the poor proceedings of a case when Islamabad High Court had annulled proceedings twice, ordered access to media and public but on the contrary, access of legal team was denied, and a decision reached in a haste," the party said in WhatsApp message.

The PTI leaders were first indicted in October 2023 but the process was reversed by the Islamabad High Court while ruling against in-camera proceedings. They were indicted again in December. —*PTI*

Police officers stand guard outside the Adiyala prison, where a special court proceeding going on for a case against former Prime Minister Imran Khan, in Rawalpindi, Pakistan on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

NEW NOTES ISSUED

Pakistan to combat counterfeit currency

KARACHI, 30 JAN

Pakistan's central bank has announced that it will introduce new currency notes with enhanced security features to deal with the menace of counterfeit currencies in the cash-strapped country.

The Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan Jameel Ahmed told the media here that the currency notes will be incorporated with advanced international security features, including distinct security numbers and design to modernise the Pakistani currency.

Ahmed also said the transition would be gradual so that Pakistan does not face disruption and public panic problems as has been witnessed in some other countries in the past. However, some financial experts wonder whether the introduction of new currency notes could also include demonetisation of the Rs 5,000 or higher denomination notes to combat the counterfeit and black money market. According to experts, cash-strapped Pakistan's economy is influenced a lot by the illegal use of black money which is easier due to the circulation of higher denomination notes.

> **It is the right step to ensure the integrity of Pakistan's monetary system but will this include demonetisation has to be seen**
>
> -Sohail Farooq, Member of Capital Investment

"It is the right step to ensure the integrity of Pakistan's monetary system but will this include demonetisation has to be seen," said Sohail Farooq of the Capital Investment. He confirmed there had been a rise in the use of counterfeit currency notes in the market, concerning the central bank. "If new currency notes are circulated, it will ensure reliability in circulation and also give businesses confidence," he said. Another banker said the central bank must just ensure there is no inconvenience to the public and businesses during the implementation of the new currency. —*PTI*

LANKAN OPPN RALLIES

Supporters of Sri Lanka's main opposition shout slogans as police fire water cannons to disperse them during a protest rally against high taxes and increases in electricity and fuel charges, in Colombo, Sri Lanka on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

MACRON GETS WARM WELCOME IN SWEDEN

STOCKHOLM, 30 JAN

French President Emmanuel Macron was welcomed on Tuesday with pomp and ceremony at the start of a two-day state visit to Sweden during which he will meet Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson and the Scandinavian country's monarch, King Carl XVI Gustaf.

Macron and his wife, Brigitte, were greeted by the king in the inner courtyard of the downtown Stockholm royal castle that is the official residence of the Swedish royals. There, Macron and Carl Gustaf reviewed members of the Grenadier Guards that had lined up. Macron noted that it had been too long since a French president visited Sweden — the last time was in 2014, when Francois Hollande travelled to the Scandinavian country. Macron is to discuss the future of European security at a military academy in Stockholm, together with Kristersson and the king. Russia's war on Ukraine and Sweden's NATO application are likely to be on the table. —*AP*

France votes on enshrining abortion rights in Constitution

PARIS, 30 JAN

France's National Assembly takes up a bill on Tuesday meant to enshrine a woman's right to an abortion in the French Constitution, the first key step in a legislative process that also requires a vote in the Senate.

The measure has been promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback of abortion rights in the United States. Macron's government wants Article 34 of France's constitution amended to include that "the law determines the conditions by which is exercised the freedom of women to have recourse to an abortion, which is guaranteed".

A constitutional amendment must pass both chambers of parliament and then be approved either in a referendum or by a three-fifths majority of a joint session of parliament. Macron's government is aiming for the second method, though the measure's level of support in the Senate is less certain than in the National Assembly.

None of France's major political parties represented in parliament is questioning the right to abortion, and a majority of deputies in the National Assembly, the lower house of parliament, are expected to vote in favour of the proposal.

Some members of the conservative majority in the Senate have criticised the wording of the proposal, making its passage there more uncertain. If the same version of the bill ultimately passes both houses, Macron would call a special session of all legislators in attempts to win a three-fifths vote. Abortion in France was decriminalized under a 1975 law, but there is nothing in the constitution that would guarantee abortion rights.

The government argued in its introduction to the bill that the right to abortion is threatened in the United States, where the Supreme Court in 2022 overturned a 50-year-old ruling that had guaranteed the right to an abortion. —*AP*

The measure has been promised by President Emmanuel Macron following a rollback of abortion rights in the US **PHOTO: AP**

Ukraine strikes on targets to show war isn't hitting home

MOSCOW, 30 JAN

The wail of air raid sirens is commonplace in Belgorod, a Russian border city whose residents are on edge following a Ukrainian missile attack on a New Year's holiday weekend that left dozens of people dead and injured.

A spectacular explosion rocked a huge fuel export terminal on the Baltic Sea southwest of St Petersburg this month from a Ukrainian drone, forcing the energy company Novatek to suspend operations for several days.

Last week, an apparent drone attack in the Black Sea port of Tuapse in the southern Krasnodar region hit one of Russia's largest refineries and ignited a fire, while another big refinery in the Volga River city of Yaroslavl, north of Moscow came under attack early Monday, but officials said there was no damage.

- There also have been strikes on a gunpowder factory in the Tambov region and arms producers and military facilities in the Bryansk, Smolensk and Tula regions

There also have been strikes on a gunpowder factory in the Tambov region and arms producers and military facilities in the Bryansk, Smolensk and Tula regions.

Attacks like these are dealing a heavy blow to President Vladimir Putin's attempts to reassure Russians that life in the country is largely untouched by the nearly 2-year-old war.

"Ukraine has increased its capacity to strike back against Russia," Michael Kofman, a military expert with the Carnegie Endowment, said in a recent podcast. "You see increased Ukrainian attacks against Russian critical infrastructure, retaliatory attacks against cities like Belgorod and greater strikes against Russian military base in Crimea," he said.

As Putin ramps up his campaign ahead of the presidential election in March, he wants to maintain an air of normalcy. But the increasingly frequent Ukrainian attacks have raised the visibility of the war on Russian soil, and there are other signs the conflict is increasingly challenging the Kremlin's tight control of the political scene. —*AP*

China protests illtreatment of students in US

BEIJING, 30 JAN

The Chinese government has protested to the United States over the treatment of Chinese arriving to study in America, saying some have been interrogated for hours, had their electronic devices checked and in some cases were forcibly deported from the country.

Xie Feng, the Chinese ambassador in Washington, said dozens of Chinese holding valid visas have been denied entry over the past few months when returning to school from overseas travel or visiting relatives in China, according to a post on the Chinese Embassy website.

"When they landed at the airport, what awaited them was an eight-hour-long interrogation by officers who prohibited them from contacting their parents, made groundless accusations against them and even forcibly repatriated them and banned their entry," he said on Sunday at an event at the embassy on student exchanges. "This is absolutely unacceptable."

PHOTO: AP

The protest comes as the US and China try to boost student and other exchanges to shore up their relations, which have turned confrontational in recent years over trade, technology, human rights and, more fundamentally, the future direction of the world.

- The protest comes as the US and China try to boost student and other exchanges to shore up their relations, which have turned confrontational in recent years over trade, technology, human rights and, more fundamentally, the future direction of the world

Nearly 290,000 Chinese students are in the US, about one-third of the foreign students in the country, according to the embassy post. China has more than 1.3 million students studying abroad, more than any other country, it said.

In a separate online statement, the Chinese Embassy said it had made "solemn representations" to the US government about the treatment of students arriving at Dulles airport in Washington, DC.

The statement reminded Chinese students to be cautious when entering through the airport. —*AP*

DRAWING IN IRAN-US TENSIONS

Drone attack on American troops risks widening Middle East conflict

WASHINGTON, 30 JAN

A drone attack that killed three American troops and wounded at least 34 more at a base in Jordan has increased fears of a widening conflict in the Middle East – and the possibility that the US may be further drawn into the fighting.

President Joe Biden vowed to respond to the assault, blaming Iran-backed militias for the first US military casualties in months of such strikes in the region. But to what extent was Iran involved? And what happens next? The Conversation turned to Sara Harmouch, an expert on asymmetric warfare and militant groups in the Middle East, to answer these and other questions.

What do we know about the group that claimed responsibility?

Al-Muqawama al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq, which translates as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, has claimed responsibility for the drone attack.

However, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq is not a single group per se.

Rather, it is a term used to describe an umbrella organization, which, since around 2020, has included various Iran-backed militias in the region.

Initially, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq emerged as a response to foreign military presence and political interventions, especially after the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. The Islamic Resistance in Iraq acted as a collective term for pro-Tehran Iraqi militias, allowing them to launch attacks under a single banner. Over time, it evolved to become a front for Iran-backed militias operating beyond Iraq, including those in Syria and Lebanon.

Today, the Islamic Resistance in Iraq operates as a cohesive force rather than as a singular entity – that is to say, as a network its objectives often align with Iran's goal of preserving its influence across the region, but on a national level the groups have their distinct agendas.

The collective is notorious for its staunch anti-US posture and dynamic military campaigns, such as a recent two-day drone operation targeting American forces at an Iraqi airbase. Operating under this one banner of Islamic Resistance, these militias effectively conceal the identities of the actual perpetrators in their operations.

—*The Conversationv*

William Jerome Rivers, Kennedy Ladon Sanders, and Breonna Alexsondria Moffett **PHOTO: US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE**

US DOESN'T SEEK ANOTHER WAR, SAYS WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON, 30 JAN

A day after three US troops were killed in a drone strike in Jordan, the White House on Monday said it does not want to seek another war or escalate the tension, but would absolutely do what is required to protect itself in the region. John Kirby, Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council in the White House, told reporters at a news conference here that the attack also sent more than 30 US soldiers to hospital, some with serious injuries. "These troops were conducting a vital mission in the region, aimed at helping US work with partners to counter ISIS. And even as the Defence Department gathers more information about the attack, that mission must and will continue," he said. "The counter-ISIS mission is separate and distinct ..indeed it has been longstanding and unrelated to our efforts to support Israel and to prevent a wider conflict in the region," Kirby said. "We do not seek another war. We do not seek to escalate. But we will absolutely do what is required to protect ourselves, to continue that mission, and to respond appropriately to these attacks," he asserted. —*PTI*

Rupee rises 5 paise to 83.11 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

The rupee appreciated 5 paise to 83.11 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, following a weak greenback against major currencies overseas amid a muted trend in domestic equities.At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.14 against the greenback. Moving in a very tight range, the unit hit an intraday low of 83.15 and a high of 83.11 against the greenback.The local unit finally settled at 83.11 against the dollar, higher by 5 paise (provisional) from its previous close.On Monday, the rupee depreciated 5 paise to 83.16 against the US dollar.According to AnujChoudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, the rupee gained on Tuesday on the softening of the US Dollar and a decline in crude oil prices from higher levels.—*PTI*

Gold gains ₹200; silver climbs ₹300

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Gold prices gained Rs 200 to Rs 63,300 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid a jump in precious metal prices in overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.The prices of the yellow metal ended at Rs 63,100 per 10 grams in the previous trade. Silver also advanced Rs 300 to Rs 76,700 per kilogram, while it had closed at Rs 76,400 per kg in the previous close.In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,038 per ounce, up by USD 7 from the previous close."- Gold traded higher on Tuesday, boosted by falling US Treasury yields and safe haven buying," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.Moreover, silver was also up at USD 23.15 per ounce in the global markets, while it had closed at USD 22.99 per ounce in the previous trade.—*PTI*

Ex-rly chief Anil Lahoti appointed TRAI Chairman

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Former Railway Board Chief Anil Kumar Lahoti has been appointed as the chairman of the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI).The top position at TRAI fell vacant after the tenure of former chairman PD Vaghela ended about four months back."The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet has approved the appointment of Anil Kumar Lahoti, Former Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Railway Board, Ministry of Railways ... as Chairman, TRAI for a period of three years from the date of assumption of charge of the post or until he attains the age of 65 years or until further orders, whichever is earlier," a notification by the Department of Personnel and Training.The industry meanwhile welcomed the appointment of the new TRAI Chief and expressed optimism that it would mark a period of growth and advancement of India's dynamic telecom sector."We are optimistic that the growth and advancement of India's dynamic telecom sector will find new impetus and gain profoundly from his rich experience.—*PTI*

Porsche India posts record sales at 914 units in 2023

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

Luxury sports car maker Porsche India on Tuesday reported its best retail sales with 914 units in 2023, a growth of 17 % over the previous year. The company also fulfilled its commitment of an electric future by recording the highest number of 113 Taycan deliveries to date, Porsche India said in a statement. Besides, a record 65 units of the iconic 911 model were delivered in the same period, it added. Porsche India Brand Director, ManolitoVujicic said,"2023 was another strong year for Porsche India where sales of every model played a significant factor in our encouraging result."He further said it sets a good benchmark for 2024 which will see several new products being launched.—*PTI*

Sensex declines over 1 pc on heavy selling in Reliance, others

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 801.67 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 71,139.90

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Benchmark equity indices declined on Tuesday, a day after recording sharp gains, with the BSE Sensex falling over 1 per cent due to selling in Reliance Industries, ITC and Bajaj Finance.

The 30-share BSE Sensex fell by 801.67 points or 1.11 per cent to settle at 71,139.90. During the day, it plummeted 865.85 points or 1.20 per cent to 71,075.72.

The Nifty declined 215.50 points or 0.99 per cent to 21,522.10.

Among the Sensex firms, Bajaj Finance fell by 5.03 per cent after its December quarter earnings failed to cheer investors.

Titan, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finserv, Reliance Industries, ITC and NTPC were among the other major laggards.

Tata Motors, State Bank of India, Hindustan Unilever, Power Grid, Tech Mahindra and Tata Consultancy Services were the gainers.

The Nifty declined 215.50 points or 0.99 per cent to 21,522.10
PHOTO: PTI

"Selling intensified towards the fag end as investors further slashed their positions in key stocks ahead of the Budget while weakness in several Asian indices also contributed to the overall fall.

"With just one day left for the Budget, investors want to play it safe although there would not be any big-bang announcement by the government in this budget. Focus would rather shift to US Fed policy but indications are that it may maintain the status quo on interest rates, which could unsettle investors further," said PrashanthTapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

- Benchmark equity indices declined on Tuesday, a day after recording sharp gains, with the BSE Sensex falling over 1 per cent due to selling in Reliance Industries, ITC and Bajaj Finance

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge declined 0.53 per cent while smallcap index climbed 0.18 per cent.

Consumer durables declined 2.40 per cent, capital goods dipped 1.24 per cent, power (1.12 per cent), FMCG (1 per cent), utilities (0.92 per cent) and industrials (0.77 per cent).

Realty emerged as the only gainer.

In Asian markets, Tokyo settled in the positive territory while Seoul, Shanghai and Hong Kong ended lower.

European markets were trading with gains. The US markets ended higher on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent to USD 82.57 a barrel on Tuesday.

The BSE benchmark jumped 1,240.90 points or 1.76 per cent to settle at 71,941.57 on Monday. The Nifty climbed 385 points or 1.80 per cent to 21,737.60.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 110.01 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

—*PTI*

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Tuesday accepted a petition by a Zee Entertainment
PHOTO: PTI

NCLT issues notice to Sony to file reply in 3 weeks

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) on Tuesday accepted a petition by a Zee Entertainment shareholder seeking the merger of its Indian entity with Sony, which was called off last week despite regulatory approvals.The Mumbai-bench of NCLT issued a notice on a petition moved by Mad Men Film Ventures, a shareholder of Zee Entertainment Enterprises (ZEEL), directing Sony Pictures Network India, now known as Culver Max, to file a reply within three weeks.

Mad Men Film Ventures on Tuesday filed the petition requesting both ZEEL and Sony to implement the merger as it was approved by the NCLT in August 2023. The tribunal did not agree to the arguments made by the counsel stating that the approval by NCLT was conditional and depended on various conditions, which may be fulfilled or waived off in writing. NCLT has kept the next date of hearing on this matter on 12 March. Last week, the Sony Group Corp called off the merger with ZEEL following a stalemate over who will lead the merged entity. This merger could have otherwise created a $10 billion media enterprise in the country. The deal stipulated that the merger was to be completed before 21 December, 2023, including regulatory and other approvals with a grace period of one month to complete the transaction. —*PTI*

EPACK Durable makes muted debut

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Shares of EPACK Durable Ltd on Tuesday listed with a discount of nearly 4 per cent against the issue price of Rs 230. EPACK Durable manufactures room air conditioners and small household appliances.

The stock of the company started the trade at Rs 225, lower by 2.17 per cent from the issue price on the BSE. It further fell by 8.15 per cent to Rs 211.25.

At the NSE, it declined 3.91 per cent to Rs 221 in opening deals.

The company's market valuation stood at Rs 2,086.97 crore.

The initial share sale of EPACK Durable was subscribed 16.37 times on the final day of subscription on 24 January.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) had a fresh issue of Rs 400 crore and an Offer-for-Sale (OFS) of up to 1,04,37,047 equity shares. The price band was fixed at Rs 218-230 a share.

The stock of the company started the trade at Rs 225, lower by 2.17 per cent from the issue price on the BSE
PHOTO: X

Founded in 2002, the company has integrated manufacturing facilities in Dehradun (Uttarakhand) and Bhiwadi (Rajasthan). It manufactures room air conditioners, components, and small household appliances for leading Indian and MNC brands in India as an Original Design Manufacturer (ODM). —*PTI*

- The company's market valuation stood at Rs 2,086.97 cr.The initial share sale was subscribed 16.37 times on the final day of subscription on 24 January

L&T to set up solar power plant in Dubai

CHENNAI, 30 JAN

Larsen and Toubro (L&T) on Tuesday said it has bagged a project to set up a solar power plant in Dubai.

The order has been bagged by the renewable engineering, procurement, and construction (EPC) arm of L&T's power transmission and distribution business. The project involves setting up a "solar photovoltaic plant in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates," the company said in a filing to BSE.

"We are committed to bringing in our innovative renewable energy solutions and project management expertise to speed up energy transition in the region which is pursuing economic development combined with sustainable practices," T Madhava Das, Whole-Time Director and Senior Executive Vice President (Utilities), L&T said. L&T is a $ 23 billion Indian multinational engaged in EPC projects, hi-tech manufacturing and services.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: REUTERS

Boeing withdraws request for safety exemption post scrutiny

SEATTLE, 30 JAN

Facing severe criticism after a door plug blew out on a 737 Max over Oregon this month, Boeing said on Monday that it is withdrawing a request for a safety exemption needed to certify a new model of the plane.

The company asked federal regulators late last year to allow it to begin delivering its 737 Max 7 airliner to customers even though it does not meet a safety standard designed to prevent part of the engine housing from overheating and breaking off during flight.

But after a door panel blew out on a different version of the plane — a Max 9 — leaving a gaping hole in the fuselage of an Alaska Airlines flight out of Portland, Oregon, on 5 January, the company's quality control and commitment to safety have been questioned.

Last week, Democratic Sens. Maria Cantwell, chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, and Tammy Duckworth, chair of its aviation safety subcommittee, urged the Federal Aviation Administration to deny the request. Boeing said on Monday it would withdraw it.

"While Boeing never should have sought this exemption to put another new aircraft with a known safety defect into service in the first place, I'm both relieved and appreciative that they are putting the flying public's safety first by withdrawing this petition," Duckworth, of Illinois, said in an emailed statement.

"I hope this decision marks the beginning of a turnaround in Boeing's safety culture."

In its announcement, the company said it was "committed to being transparent, listening to all our stakeholders and taking action to strengthen safety and quality at Boeing".

The safety standard concerns an anti-icing system, and the issue affects other models of the 737 Max that are already flying.

Federal officials said last year that Boeing was working to fix the hazard on current Max planes, and in the meantime regulators urged pilots to limit the de-icing system's use in dry conditions because inlets around the engines could get too hot and parts of the housing could break away and strike the plane, possibly breaking windows and causing rapid decompression. —*PTI*

The company asked federal regulators late last year to allow it to begin delivering its 737 Max 7 airliner to customers
PHOTO: AP

IRREGULARITIES, A CONCERN

Toyota announced that irregularities in horsepower output certification tests were found on three diesel engine models
PHOTO: REUTERS

Toyota suspends dispatch of 3 models in India

TOKYO, 30 JAN

Toyota Kirloskar Motor is temporarily suspending the dispatch of its three models -- InnovaCrysta, Fortuner and Hilux -- in the country after "irregularities" were found in the certification tests for the diesel powertrain.

Toyota Industries Corporation (TICO), a company affiliated with Toyota Motor Corporation (TMC), on 29 January, 2024, announced that irregularities in horsepower output certification tests were found on three diesel engine models.

In case of India, such engines are used in InnovaCrysta, Fortuner and Hilux.

"The irregularities concern the smoothing of power and torque curves but did not lead to any over-stating or over-claims on horsepower, torque or other powertrain related values," a Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) spokesperson said in a statement when contacted over the issue.

The issue does not have any impact on the emissions or safety of the affected vehicles, the company stated.

Toyota group plant raided in test cheating probe as automaker says it sold 11.2M vehicles in 2023

Japanese transport officials raided the plant of a Toyota group company on Tuesday to investigate cheating on engine testing, as the company reported it kept its status as the world's top automaker in 2023, selling 11.2 million vehicles.

Hours after the probe began at Toyota Industries Corp.'s plant in Hekinan, Aichi Prefecture, central Japan, Toyota Chairman Akio Toyoda vowed to steer the company out of scandal and ensure the Japanese automaker sticks to "making good cars."

"My job is to steer the way for where the overall group should go," Toyoda said.

He apologised, bowing deeply, and stressed the group vision was rooted in the Toyoda founding family's ideas of empowering the "genba," or the workers on the plant floor, "to make good cars that lead to people's happiness."

Toyoda spoke in a news conference that was live streamed from a memorial hall in Nagoya that serves as a museum for the founding family. Sakichi Toyoda invented the automated weaving loom. His son Kiichiro Toyoda, Akio's grandfather, founded Toyota Motor Corp. —*PTI*

'BRANDING' VITAL FOR SMALL TEA GROWERS

GUWAHATI, 30 JAN

For small tea growers, who contribute over half of the total tea produced in the country annually, the need for 'branding' is among the most crucial thing of the hour, speakers at a conclave said here on Monday.

As quality compliance remains an issue for these tea planters, branding of their product will help overcome the allegation of poor quality leaves produced by them to a large extent, they maintained. They were participating in a discussion on 'Small Tea Holder Revolution in Assam and India' on the inaugural day of the two-day Bicentenary Assam Tea International Conference 2024."Quality compliance is a major issue faced by us. To overcome it, branding is most important," Bijoy Gopal Chakraborty of the Confederation of Indian Small Team Growers Association (CISTA) said. The small tea growers contribute over 50 per cent of the tea produced in the country, but allegations of poor quality leaves are frequent against us, he claimed.Chakraborty maintained that branding can help in addressing quality compliance issue to a large extent. —*PTI*

QUALITY EVALUATION

Meesho delists 2L products post quality check; to reduce low-rated items

BENGALURU, 30 JAN

Softbank-backed Meesho on Tuesday said it has delisted nearly two lakh products from its e-commerce platform in the last quarter after quality check and plans to reduce visibility of low-rated items by 20 per cent within six months.

The company said that quality evaluation was conducted through a comprehensive analysis of customer reviews, ratings and feedback.

"Post evaluation, Meesho delisted nearly two lakh products in the last quarter alone. Meesho has further invested in the power of artificial intelligence to fortify quality checks while continuously working to improve key word databases and detection capabilities on the platform," the company said.

The company further said that it determines quality through customer reviews, ratings and feedback as well as through any reported issues or returns related to the product's condition, functionality, or overall satisfaction.

Meesho has invested in the power of artificial intelligence to fortify quality checks
PHOTO: REUTERS

- Softbank-backed Meesho on Tuesday said it has delisted nearly two lakh products from its e-commerce platform in the last quarter after quality check and plans to reduce low-rated items

The e-commerce firm largely focuses on small sellers that mostly sell unbranded products on the platform.

"Over the past year, Meesho has seen a 35 per cent increase in the ratings received for delivered products. Products consistently rated below three (out of five) are removed from the feed.

In the past six months, there has been a 15 per cent decrease in the visibility for lower-rated products. Our goal is to further reduce it by 20 per cent within the next 6 months, ensuring ongoing enhancement in product quality and customer satisfaction," the statement said.

If a seller's product consistently garners poor ratings and reviews, the product will be delisted from the platform to help maintain the quality standards expected by our customers, the statement said.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Mayank Agarwal rushed to Agartala hospital

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

Out-of-favour India opener and current Karnataka skipper Mayank Agarwal was rushed to a local hospital after falling ill just before his New Delhi-bound flight was about to take off, an incident that shocked the cricket fraternity as the player lodged an official police complaint alleging foul play. He is believed to have taken ill after drinking liquid from a pouch, which he thought was water, and was kept on his seat as he was on board with IndiGo Airlines. Agarwal lodged a formal complaint with the police through his manager. "Mayank Agarwal, an international cricket player, is now stable and his vitals are normal. But his manager has lodged a spe-cific complaint under NCCPS (New Capital Complex Police Station) to investigate the matter," SP West Tripura Kiran Kumar told PTI here.—*PTI*

India lose to Netherlands in quarterfinals

AMSTERDAM, 30 JAN

Mohammed Raheel's hat-trick went in vain as India suffered a 4-7 defeat to the Netherlands in the quarterfinals of the FIH Hockey5s Men's World Cup on Tuesday.Apart from Raheel (1, 7, 25), Mandeep Mor (11) scored for India. For the Netherlands, Sander de Wijn (4, 15), and Alexander Schop (10, 26) scored a brace each, while Lucas Middendorp (12), Jamie van Aart (13), and Pepijn Reyenga (20) also found the net.The match started promising for India as Raheel showcased his skills with a remarkable field goal in the very first minute, setting the tone for an intense competition. However, the Netherlands swiftly responded to India's early lead, with de Wijn (4) leveling the score.—*AP*

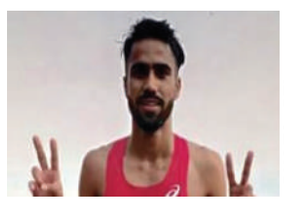


PHOTO: PTI

Akshdeep breaks own record in men's 20km

CHANDIGARH, 30 JAN

A Paris Olympics berth already secured Akshdeep Singh of Punjab shattered his national record enroute retaining the men's 20km title at the National Open Race Walking competition here on Tuesday. Akshdeep who qualified for this year's Olympics while winning the title in the 2023 edition of the National Open Race Walking Competition in Ranchi clocked 1 hour 19 minutes and 38 seconds to better his earlier national mark of 1:19:55. Second place finisher Suraj Panwar of Uttarakhand also breached the Paris Games qualifying mark of 1:20:10 by clocking 1:19:43. Panwar is the fourth Indian in men s 20km race walk event to qualify for Paris Olympics.—*PTI*

AIPA inks deal to organise inaugural Pickleball League

NEW DELHI, 30 JAN

The All India Pickleball Association (AIPA) has inked a long-term deal with Natekar Sports and Gaming (NSG) to organize a pickleball league in the country.The collaboration marks a significant step towards amplifying the sport's reach across the nation setting it on an upward trajectory.I am thrilled to announce our ground-breaking collaboration with Natekar Sports and Gaming for the 'first of its kind' Pickleball league in India which will not only see Indian athletes but also international athletes participating in it President of AIPA Arvind Prabhoo said in a media release.—*PTI*

India's selection headache deepens

Untimely injuries to Jadeja and Rahul are a low

VISAKHAPATNAM, 30 JAN

Untimely injuries to Ravindra Jadeja and K L Rahul have given a major selection headache to India as they seek to bounce back in the second Test against England following a rare defeat at home.

Both Jadeja and Rahul were among India's main performers in the first innings of the Hyderabad Test before England turned the tables on the formidable hosts. Jadeja sustained a hamstring injury while going for a quick single during the Hyderabad Test while Rahul has complained of pain in his right quadriceps. The duo's unavailability adds to the woes of the home side which was stunned by England's Bazball strategy. Jadeja with his exceptional all-round abilities makes himself almost irreplaceable and Rahul too has been among India's standout batters across the ODI and Test format since returning from surgery in September.

Virat Kohli remains unavailable due to personal reasons and after a shock reverse in the series opener, the management will be missing him even more in Visakhapatnam where the second Test begins on Friday.

Rohit Sharma and Rahul Dravid have enough options to choose from with selectors adding three players to the squad Sarfaraz Khan Sourabh Kumar and Washington Sundar.

Ravindra Jadeja and K L Rahul have given a major selection headache PHOTO: PTI

A straightforward selection will be Rajat Patidar who was also a part of the 15 in Hyderabad. He could take Rahul's place in the middle-order with Kuldeep Yadav replacing Jadeja as the third spinner alongside R Ashwin and Axar Patel. Another option for India is to do what England did in the opener play only one pacer for four spin choices. In that case, Mohammed Siraj could make way for Kuldeep and the team can accommodate either Sarfaraz or Washington to solidify the middle-order.

Sourabh who also bowls left-arm spin like Jadeja and is a decent batter with a couple of first-class hundreds to his name can be a dark horse in that race. The ACA-VDCA Stadium in Visakhapatnam has staged two Tests to date and the pitch is usually a batting-friendly one at least in the first innings. Batting first at the venue back in 2019 India had racked up 502 in the first innings against South Africa with Mayank Agarwal getting a double hundred and Rohit scoring a brisk 176 in his first innings as a Test opener. Spin legend Anil Kumble feels wrist spinner Kuldeep's presence in the eleven will be helpful.

If India feels that they need only one fast bowler then having Kuldeep will certainly help. He will have variations but England will come and do the same things they did in Hyderabad Kumble told the host broadcaster. The wicket could be a turning one and we are expecting the pace to be quicker than this. This was slow but it was a good wicket if you applied yourself. India certainly needs to buckle up with their approach to playing against spin. —*PTI*

Ben Stokes PHOTO: PTI

Spinners give us chance to defeat India: Stokes

VISAKHAPATNAM, 30 JAN

Long before debutant spinner Tom Hartley bowled England to a famous win in the first Test against India skipper Ben Stokes had asserted that the tweakers picked for the series give us the best opportunity to humble the Asian giants in their backyard. Playing in his first Test left-arm spinner Hartley picked up seven wickets in the Indian second innings to script a 28-run victory for the tourists who gambled with a lone specialist pacer in Mark Wood in Hyderabad.

I think sometimes inexperience can be looked at a bit too much.

There's no doubt that experience makes players feel more comfortable and settled especially in this environment Stokes said in an interview with JioCinema when asked about his approach behind selecting spinners just before the start of the series opener. —*PTI*

Musheer Khan's ICC U-19 World Cup second hundred trampled New Zealand by 214 PHOTO: AP

Musheer and Saumy guide India to a massive win

BLOEMFONTEIN, 30 JAN

Musheer Khan's superlative showing in the ongoing ICC U-19 World Cup continued as his second hundred trampled New Zealand by 214 runs in a SuperSix encounter here on Tuesday.

After India's top performer Musheer's 131 backed by opener Adarsh Singh's 52 powered India to a huge total of 295/8, left-arm spinner Saumy Kumar Pandey (4/19) and pacer RajLimbani (2/17) ripped apart New Zealand's top order to bowl them out for a mere81 in 28.1 over.

India vice-captain Pandey finished with splendid figures of 10-2-19-4 as he knocked the stuffing out of the Black Caps' chase. Left reeling at 27/4in the Powerplay, New Zealand could never really stage a comeback as India like every edition is looking for favourites to win the tournament.

For New Zealand, it was their third-heaviest defeat in terms of runs and also their third-lowest total at the U-19 World Cup stage. Earlier, Musheerflayed New Zealand's attack with his second century of the ICC U-19 World Cup while opener Adarsh Singh struck 52 as India posted a stiff 296–run target.

On a perfect batting wicket here at the Mangaung Oval, Musheer tore apart the Kiwi's bowling line-up to become the first batter in the current competition to breach the 300-run mark, going past Pakistan's Shahzaib Khan with his stupendous effort.

En route to his 131, Musheer blasted 13 fours and three sixes off just 125 balls and once showed admirable temperament to up the ante just when it was required. Busy at the crease constantly, the 18-year-old Musheer motored on from one end unleashing strokes in all directions, while he began with an upper-cut for a four. His innings were spruced with fine running between the wickets and ended in the death overs when he was looking to accelerate. Musheer and Adarsh carried out a fine recovery job with a 77-run stand for the second wicket after an early blow for India. Adarsh took charge of attacking the bowlers as he looked good while driving on the rise and also played the pull shot with Elan. It was only unfortunate that he failed to keep a drive in check when Zac Cumming (1/37)teased him with one outside off. He had two fifties control at the start of the tournament. Saharan, nevertheless, did a fine job of consolidating the innings for his side, putting on 87 with Musheer which also happened to be the best stand for India in this game. However, Musheer 'century and Adarsh's contribution at the top notwithstanding, India lost wickets in a flurry towards the end to fall short of breaching the 300-run mark, finishing at 295 for eight.

Brief scores: IndiaU-19 295/8 in 50 overs (Adarsh Singh 52, Musheer Khan 131, Uday Saharan 35; Mason Clarke 4/64) beat New Zealand U-19 81 in 28.1 overs (Oscar Jackson 19; Raj Limbani 2/17, Saumy 4/19) by 214 runs. —*AP*

It's a historical tie, we will benefit from the Indian team's visit: Pakistan tennis fraternity

ISLAMABAD, 30 JAN

Indian tennis team in Pakistan for first time in 60 Years PHOTO: PTI

Pakistan has paid a huge price in the absence of international sporting events in the last decade and the tennis fraternity is hoping that the arrival of the Indian Davis Cup team for the historic tie will inject fresh enthusiasm and provide a big boost to the game in the country.The last time an Indian Davis Cup team traveled to Pakistan was way back in 1964. The All India Tennis Association (AITA) was not keen on sending its team this year too but the ITF rejected its appeal and said categorically that there is no reason to believe that Indian players will face any security concerns in Pakistan. International sporting events in Pakistan came to a halt after the attack on the Sri Lankan cricket team bus in March 2009 in Lahore. Consequently, the country was barred from hosting world-level tournaments across sports.The Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) could not host either junior ITF events or senior men's Future tournaments. —*AP*

Bhutia demands Chaubey's resignation

MUMBAI, 30 JAN

Bhaichung Bhutia PHOTO: AP

Former captain Bhaichung Bhutia on Tuesday demanded the resignation of All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey, holding him responsible for the "current mess" in the administrative side of the game in the country, following the dismissal of Shaji Prabhakaran as secretary general. Bhutia attended Tuesday's executive committee meeting of the AIFF called here to discuss the dismissal of Prabhakaran on November 7. Prabhakaran was not initially invited to the meeting but joined it virtually.

"I told the executive committee members that Kalyan Chaubey and treasurer Kipa Ajay should also resign. Shaji Prabhakaran should not be made the only scapegoat. All three of them are equally responsible for making decisions without the approval of the executive committee," Bhutia told PTI. "All three of them were taking the decisions and If Shaji has to be removed, the president and treasurer should also be removed. —*PTI*

India outplay Kenya 9-4 at FIH WC

MUSCAT, 30 JAN

Uttam Singh PHOTO: AP

Uttam Singh slammed a hat-trick as the Indian men'shockey team secured a convincing 9-4 victory against Kenya in the 5th-8th placeclassification match of the FIH Hockey5s men's World Cup here on Tuesday.

Uttam(5th 25th 26th minutes) netted thrice while Manjeet (6th) Pawan Rajbhar (10th) Mandeep Mor (15th) Mohammed Raheel (17th 25th) and Gurjot Singh (28th)were the other scorers for India.

For Kenya Moses Ademba (12th 14th 27th) and captain Ivan Ludiali(24th) were the goalscorers. Right from the start India took control ofthe game challenging Kenya's goalkeeper multiple times in the initial minutes.

Despite Kenya's efforts to counterattack India maintained aggressive-play. The breakthrough for India came when Uttam and Manjeet scored in quicksuccession to hand India an early lead.

Continuing their relentless assault India kept up the pressure on Kenya's defence resulting in Rajbhar addinganother goal with a powerful shot. Kenya however narrowed the gap with twoquick goals from Moses Ademba. —*AP*

Australian Open champion Jannik Sinner, center left, walks at Leonardo da Vinci airport in Fiumicino, Italy, Tuesday. Sinner has returned to Italy amid great fanfare with RAI state TV broadcasting live his arrival at the Rome airport. PHOTO: AP

Rakitic ends second stint with Spanish club Sevilla to join Al Shabab

SEVILLE, 30 JAN

Ivan Rakitic is the latest soccer player to leave Europe for Saudi Arabia, moving from Spanish club Sevilla to Al Shabab.

Sevilla announced the deal on Tuesday, ending the Croatian's stint with the club after 323 appearances over two separate periods.

Financial details of the move were not immediately available.

The 35-year-old Rakitic played for Sevilla from 2011-14 before being sold to Barcelona, where the midfielder stayed until returning in 2020.

Rakitic is the player with the second most official appearances in the current Sevilla squad, after Jesús Navas. He is the international player with the most appearances for the club, and the only one to have surpassed the 300-game mark.

Ivan Rakitic PHOTO: AP

Rakitic helped Sevilla win two Europa League titles, in 2014 and 2023.

"Everyone at the club would like to thank Ivan Rakitic, one of the most decorated and loved players in our history, for all his effort and dedication over the years, and wish him every success in the future," the club said in a statement.

Sevilla is struggling this season and sits just outside the relegation zone in the Spanish league. It has only one win in its last 16 league games and is coming off elimination in the quarterfinals of the Copa del Rey. —*AP*

Switzerland's Lara Gut Behrami celebrates on the podium after winning an alpine ski, women's World Cup giant slalom, in Kronplatz, Italy. PHOTO: AP

AFRICA CUP OF NATIONS

Ivory Coast stun AFCON holders Senegal

YAMOUSSOUKRO, 30 JAN

Hosts Ivory Coast stunned Senegal at the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday, knocking out the reigning champions on penalties in the last 16 to keep their hopes of winning the title on home soil alive. A week ago it looked as if the Ivorians were set for a humiliating group-stage exit from their own AFCON, but now they are into the quarter-finals after beating Senegal 5-4 on penalties following a tie that finished 1-1 at the end of extra time.

The Elephants scraped into the knockout phase with the worst record of the four best third-placed sides to advance, after finishing the first round with a humiliating 4-0 loss to Equatorial Guinea, their heaviest-ever home defeat.

They followed that by sacking veteran French coach Jean-Louis Gasset and trying unsuccessfully to bring in former boss Herve Renard on a short-term deal.

Instead, former player Emerse Fae was appointed on an interim basis, hoping to rouse a shell-shocked team for a daunting tie against the holders.

Ivory Coast players celebrate after defeating Senegal in a penalty shootout during their African Cup of Nations round of 16 soccer match PHOTO: AP

- Hosts Ivory Coast stunned Senegal at the Africa Cup of Nations on Monday, knocking out the reigning champions on penalties in the last 16 to keep their hopes of winning the title on home soil alive.

It looked like it was a trying evening for Ivory Coast in Yamoussoukro as Senegal went ahead in the fourth minute when Habib Diallo brought down Sadio Mane's cross from the left and finished emphatically.

Mane then escaped with a yellow card for a dangerous challenge on Ibrahim Sangare soon after, although Senegal also felt hard done by early in the second half.

Ismaila Sarr went down in the box in a tangle of legs with Odilon Kossounou, but no penalty was given and the referee did not come across to review the incident on the pitchside monitor. Instead, it was the Ivorians who won a late penalty of their own, a VAR review showing that Nicolas Pepe was chopped down by Senegal goalkeeper Edouard Mendy.

Franck Kessie of Saudi club Al Ahli, who was dropped to the bench at kick-off, converted the penalty to force extra time.

With no further scoring, it came down to penalties, and Senegal's Moussa Niakhate was the only player to miss, seeing his effort strike the post.

Kessie then netted the decisive kick to take Ivory Coast through to a last-eight tie against Mali or Burkina Faso in the central city of Bouake on Saturday.

Neighbors Mali and Burkina Faso clash in the last 16 in the northern city of Korhogo on Tuesday.

"We are feeling a lot of emotion.

—*AP*